Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy

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MULLA SADRA'S TRANSCENDENT PHILOSOPHY

Sadradin Shirazi (1571–1640), known also as Mulla Sadra, spoke of the primacy of Being and promoted a new ontology, founding a new epistemology. Mulla Sadra's ontology is an important philosophical turn and contribution to the understanding of the development of Muslim philosophy and thought.

This comprehensive study of Mulla Sadra's philosophical thought explores his departure from tradition; his turn to the doctrine of the primacy of Being; the dynamic characteristics of Being and the concept of substantial change; comparisons with Heidegger's fundamental ontology; and the influence of Mulla Sadra's ontology on subsequent Muslim philosophy. Of particular value to students of philosophy, Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, philosophy of religion, and general readers who seek to understand Muslim philosophy, this book explores the significance of the doctrine of Mulla Sadra and its impact on subsequent debates in the Muslim world.

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Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy

MUHAMMAD KAMAL

ASHGATE

Contents

What is all about beauty in the world? The image,
Like quivering boughs reflected in a stream,
Of that eternal Orchard which abides
Unwithered in the hearts of perfect men.

Jalal al-Din Rumi

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the post Ibn Sinan period, the primacy of essence (*asalat al-mahiyah*) was one of the prime philosophical issues for Muslim thinkers. The school of illumination, headed by Suhrawardi, held the view that 'essence' not 'existence' was the only reality. Nothing in the external world corresponded to 'existence', and hence 'existence' remained an empty concept and an intellectual property, whereas 'essence' was real and primary. By contrast, Sadr al-Din Shirazi (1571–1640), known also as Mulla Sadra,[1] spoke of the primacy of Being (*asalat al-wujud*) and promoted a new ontology.

From the twelfth century CE, the school of illumination occupied a focal place in the intellectual life of Muslims, particularly in the Persian-speaking world. The philosophical thought of this school marked a vivid departure from rationalism to Gnosticism, or knowledge by illumination (*al-ishraq*). Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1171–1208), the founder of this school, believed that knowledge of an object in the world came only through revealing its essence or quiddity. The Being of the object, unlike its essence, was a mental concept and had no external reality. To prove this point, Suhrawardi developed the argument that there were two possible ways of understanding the meaning of Being: either as a universal concept shared by all existent beings or as a particular being. In the first case, Being remains a mental concept, but in the second it depends on its essence to exist because a particular being is equivalent to its essence, which makes the being the way it is.[2]

A universal concept such as 'blackness' is conceived only in respect of a particular black object; existence, then, as a universal concept, reveals itself through a particular being. Thinking of existence as a universal concept, and then of its reliance on a particular type of being for its existence is similar to Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between universals and particulars. Aristotle, in rejecting the Platonic view of reality, argued for the dependence of universal determinations on particular beings and against the ontological status of universal determinations. In projecting his own views, Suhrawardi, on one hand, relied on Aristotle's argument, and, on the other, reversed the argument. He came closer to Plato by insisting on the dependence of particular beings on their universal determinations, not vice versa.[3]

Suhrawardi's thought influenced the dominant philosophical tradition in Isfahan, where Mulla Sadra studied. Mulla Sadra's teacher, Mir Muhammad Baqir al-Astarabadi (d. 1630), also known as Mir Damad, was one of the leading figures of the doctrine of illumination. But it seems that Mir Damad

was not a blind follower of Suhrawardi, because he tried to reconcile the Gnostic ideas of Illuminationism with Ibn Sina's ontology, or, as Nasr remarks, he provided the illuminationsit interpretation of Ibn Sina.[4] Mulla Sadra, at the beginning of his philosophical career, and under the influence of Mir Damad and this dominant philosophical trend in Isfahan, advocated the doctrine of the primacy of essence and was one of the followers of Illuminationism. To understand his turn from or criticism of Suhrawardi's metaphysics it is also of the utmost importance to take into account the influence of Ibn Sina (979–1037) and Ibn al-'Arabi (1163–1240) in Mulla Sadra's project of a new type of metaphysics based on the primacy of Being. This project meant destroying the foundation of essentialism in pursuit of a serious ontological investigation into the truth of Being. To achieve this, Mulla Sadra had to admit his disillusionment with essentialism and abandon the notion of the primacy essence.

Mulla Sadra belonged to the *ishraqi* philosophical tradition. He changed his position and became a defender of the doctrine of the primacy of Being under the influence of 'spiritual inspiration' rather than a rationalistic discourse and logical investigation. He clearly states 'until my God guided me and showed me his proof', which expresses the occurrence of a mystical experience for Mulla Sadra. From then on, Mulla Sadra devoted his time to defending his ontological position and the general principles of his transcendent philosophy. The 'darkness of illusion' described here is indicative of the domain of Suhrawardi's metaphysics, in which a state of untruth reigns over the whole of reality so that the meaning of Being becomes unattainable. It is reflected in the 'abandonment of Being' or 'nihilism' discussed by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and is a philosophical position from Plato to Nietzsche representing a history of negligence of the question of Being.[5] In both the Western philosophical tradition and Suhrawardi's metaphysics, what is lost or abandoned is the being of beings as a whole, which has led to the 'disintegration of truth' or the 'forgottenness' of truth and the thinking of Being as 'essence'.[6]

Turning from this type of metaphysics became a serious philosophical enterprise for Mulla Sadra after his departure for Kahak, a village near Qum, and his choosing a solitary life for more than a decade. The overcoming of the 'darkness of illusion' would be achieved by deconstructing Suhrawardi's metaphysics and in reconstructing an ontology based on the primacy of Being. The new ontology dealt with the primordial philosophical question of the meaning of the being of beings, rather than with familiarity with beings or essence. Overcoming Suhrawardi's metaphysics meant a radical change to recognizing the priority of the question of the meaning of Being.

The reason for Mulla Sadra's self-imposed exile was reportedly political. His fame in Isfahan had met with jealousy on the part of a group of religious scholars who were politically ambitious and determined to gain patronage

from the rulers of the day.[7] There was, however, more to this opposition than jealousy. Fazlur Rahman stated that, in addition to his sympathy for Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being, Mulla Sadra's ideas were too radical for the religious circle of the time.[8] The political position of his father at the Safawid court played an important role in saving him, but he was forced to make a choice between defending his views and turning to seclusion. He chose the latter, with a sense of disillusionment with the rational method of the Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophy and essentialism of the school of illumination. After his time in solitude, he returned to Shiraz, where he founded a school, where he taught thinkers such as Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Husayn al-Lahiji. In later centuries, Persian Muslim thinkers such as Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, Mulla Ali Nuri and Mulla Ali Mudarris Zunuzi came under his influence. Today, Muslim thinkers such as Abdul Hasan Qazwini, Muhammad Kazim Assar and Muhammad Hussain Tabatab'i adhere to Mulla Sadra's philosophy.[9]

As mentioned earlier, the turn from the primacy of essence to the primacy of Being in Mulla Sadra's thought belonged to his period of solitude and to his teaching in Shiraz. During that time the question of Being rather than essence proved to be 'the foundation of the principles of philosophy'.[10] For him, the primacy of Being was fundamental in the sense that Being and not essence was the only reality on which the multiplicity of beings (*essents*) stands.

Certainly, what Mulla Sadra tried to prove in his ontological enterprise of discovering a unified ground had been discussed earlier by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, Book VII. For Aristotle, the diversity of the modes of Being leads to the question of its underlying unity. But the difference between Aristotle and Mulla Sadra arises with the doctrine of the categories and the epistemological significance of this doctrine for knowing reality. Aristotle proposed ten categories, of which the most fundamental was substance, with others, for example quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, state, action, and passion, dependent for their existence on substance. These categories are classes or genera, the application or which makes possible knowledge of every mode of being and reality. Mulla Sadra's metaphysics asserts the realm of this principle of unity beyond the domain of the categories. For this reason, Being remains indefinable.[11] It is neither a genus for another entity, *differentia*, or species, nor a common or specific accident. Understanding its meaning cannot be based on anything more prevalent than itself.[12] This negative approach, however, does not mean that nothing about Being or this unifying principle can be known. The indefinability of Being points out the inherent shortcomings of Aristotle's logic and rational apprehension; meanwhile the inability of this type of logic and epistemology should not eliminate the question of its meaning. The failure of the rational apprehension of Being was not an obstacle to Mulla Sadra's ontological enterprise or to inquiry into its meaning. He denounced pure rationality, and

relied instead on intuition or mystic experience for knowing the inner reality of Being:

> As it has been stated the reality of existence is neither genus, nor species, nor accident, since it is not a natural universal. Instead, its inclusion happens in another mode of inclusion, and no one has gnosis of it except the mystics, i.e. 'those who are firmly grounded in mystical knowledge' [3:7]. Sometimes it is interpreted as the spiritual soul [i.e. Holy Spirit], other times as that grace 'which extendeth to all things' [7:156]. Sometimes [it is as the] 'reality from which entities have been created', according to the mystics. [Also, it is] the expansion of the light of existence to the structures of contingent entities, and the essences, which are receptive to it; finally [they speak of] its descent towards the abodes of inner natures.[13]

The rationalist preoccupation with epistemology does not constitute a reawakening of the question of Being because it presupposes a subject–object dichotomy. It depends on having turned away from Being to beings. Mulla Sadra's epistemology is significant for eliminating the subject–object dichotomy and reawakening the question of Being. According to Fazlur Rahman, it also shows a resemblance to the epistemological positions of Plotinus (205–270) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941). The latter, for example, insists on the point that 'duration' as an experience cannot be rationally apprehended and is a matter of intellectual intuition.[14] It is worth mentioning that, in inquiring into the meaning of Being, Mulla Sadra agreed with Suhrawardi that Being was not apprehended rationally and that the Aristotelian logic failed to reveal its truth, whereas essence was conceived rationally. Essence did not exist by itself but arose in thinking when a particular mode of Being was conceived. For this reason, essence should be thought of as a mental phenomenon that exists in thinking and for thinking and not as an external reality or something with its own ontological status.

Mulla Sadra's criticism of Suhrawardi's metaphysics became explicit in his philosophical turn when he formed the contrary philosophical view that Being was not a mental property but an objective reality outside the domain of rational thinking. For this reason, Being could be perceived and understood through its illuminative presence by a new cognitive tool. Only in this way was doubt about the inner nature of reality superseded. Based on such intuitive experience, Being appeared the most evident of all things. It was the principle without which even 'non-being' was unthinkable.[15] This ontological enterprise parallels in some ways that of Martin Heidegger, except that Mulla Sadra's ontology is entangled with theology. Otherwise, both thinkers advocate the primacy of Being. Heidegger, in interpreting the history of metaphysics, thinks that the abandonment of Being is rooted in Platonism; for Mulla Sadra it was inherited in Suhrawardi's thought. Meanwhile, they share the view that Aristotle's logic is incapable of revealing the meaning of Being.

Reliance on the Aristotelian system of logic brings shortcomings into our ontological inquiry. According to Heidegger, for instance, this reliance led the post-Aristotelian thinkers to neglect Being and to turn towards studying ontic entities instead.[16]

For Mulla Sadra, the doctrine of the primacy of essence led to the concealment of the truth. Its advocates neglected fundamental philosophical questions in favour of investigating the nature of something less fundamental or grounded that could not exist by itself. The reason for this, as explained by Mulla Sadra, lay in the reliance on the rational apprehension of Being.[17] Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), concurs, arguing that the post Aristotelian thinkers accepted the dogma of negligence, and withdrew themselves from the genuine philosophical question about the meaning of Being, for three reasons. First, they thought that Being was the most universal concept, and that its universality 'transcended' any universality of genus. Second, since Being is the most universal concept, and is not an entity, it is therefore indefinable and escapes all attempts to define it in accordance with the rules of 'definition' provided in Aristotelian logic. Third, Being is self-evident.[18] Heidegger rejects the three presuppositions and argues against the post-Aristotelian thinkers that the universality of the concept of Being does not guarantee the clarity of its meaning, and that the meaning of this concept is still the darkest of all. He also, like Mulla Sadra, says that Being is not an entity and is thus indefinable, and that Aristotle's concept of definition '*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*' is not applicable to it. Heidegger also believes that the indefinableness of Being does not invalidate the question of its meaning, and should not hinder us from investigating that meaning.[19]

There are, however, three ontological positions in dealing with the primacy of Being or essence. Either Being is prior to essence or posterior to it, or they co-exist. When Being is thought of as prior to essence, it signifies that Being can stand by itself without, or prior to, its essence. If, however, the primacy of essence is accepted as true, it implies that essence exists without Being. But for this, essence has to exist or needs another existence to rely on, and for Mulla Sadra this is a vicious regress. The third position is that existence and essence co-exist. This ontological view involves the notion that essence is with existence and not in it. In this case, essence again relies for its existence on another existence. As a consequence of this, essence cannot be without prior existence.[20]

In arguing against these three ontological positions, Mulla Sadra concluded that the qualification of essence by existence, unlike the qualification of a body by colour, is an intellectual operation. Neither existence nor essence is prior to the other, nor do they have a state of simultaneity, since nothing can be prior, posterior or simultaneous to itself. Both are ontologically inseparable and differ only in thinking:

> What has been said earlier is sufficient to refute this claim, for existence is identical with essence in the external [realm] but different from it mentally. Therefore, there is no relation between them except in intellectual consideration. In [such an intelligible] consideration, the relation will have existence which in its inner reality is identical with it, but is different from it in the realm external [to the mind]. This kind of as infinitum is stopped when the intelligible consideration is ceased.[21]

What, then, does the primacy of Being mean if these three positions are refuted? How can we talk about the primacy of Being? In answering these questions, we can think of the primacy of Being over essence and its modes like the primacy of a ground over the grounded. Mulla Sadra believes that Being and essence, like the ground and the grounded, are ontologically inseparable; they are different realities in thinking only.[22] When a being is conceived and analysed into its determinations, the Being of this being appears in thinking to be distinct from these determinations. This intellectual apprehension does not coincide with the inner reality of Being, because essence is not distinct from Being, nor is existence an addition to essence. It is only in thinking that the priority of one over the other, in particular of essence, becomes evident, because thinking analyses each entity into existence and essence. The latter appears as the prior factor due to its nature as a universal determination and something apprehended by the intellect, whereas existence is not apprehended. Here, the primacy of essence becomes a mental factor, and Being remains an ontological ground inaccessible to rational thinking. The distinction between Being and essence in the intellectual sphere is not similar to that between an object and its accident. Instead, it is like the connection that exists in the species between a genus and its *differentia*.[23] Being is a being of an object; when we abstract an essence from it that essence will not subsist. Although an accident seems to be identical to the existence of an object, it is not the being of that object. Mulla Sadra supports this view by relying on Ibn Sina's ontology, agreeing with him that an accident needs an object to become existent, whereas the case with existence and essence is different.[24] Being for Mulla Sadra has four characteristics:

- i Being stands as a unitary ground for its own modifications or the grounded.
- ii Being is separated from essence in thinking.
- iii Being is equivocal or systematically ambiguous.
- iv Being is dynamic and changes itself substantially.

In arguing for the primacy of Being and searching for a unitary ground, Mulla Sadra holds the view that essence is what distinguishes all entities from one another and limits them. When we say '*p*' is '*q*', the predicate '*q*' distinguishes and limits '*p*' by excluding other possibilities that can be predicated

of it. Once the implication of this view is taken into account and Being is thought of as a mere mental concept, as advocated by Suhrawardi and his followers, we realize the following. First, there will be limitation in reality. Second, God's existence as pure Being will not only suffer limitation by His essence but will also become a mental concept that has no ontological status but is 'unlike everything, which is other than it [lit. non-existence i.e., essence], because every other thing, to be existent requires that existence be taken into consideration and joined to it'.[25]

According to the first characteristic, Being stands as an ontological reality for all kinds of ontic entities or modes of Being. This relationship between Being and its ontic modifications is also similar to that between phenomenon and appearance in Heidegger's ontology. Heidegger makes a distinction between phenomenon and appearing. Phenomenon is something that shows itself or is manifest.[26] This showing itself is the way in which a phenomenon appears and is apprehended. The relationship between these two ontological spheres is illustrated in the metaphor of '*Krankenheitserscheinungen*' (symptoms of illness). The symptoms of influenza, such as high temperature and bodily pain, indicate a phenomenon that does not show itself, namely influenza. The phenomenon of this illness announces itself through its symptoms or signs. Appearing is, therefore, not a phenomenon but an announcing of a phenomenon, and a phenomenon is that which announces itself through its appearance.[27] In understanding the ontological division of Being into the ground and the grounded, or Being and its modes when it is understood in the light of emanation, we arrive at the conclusion that existence requires the grounded or its manifested modes to announce itself and to make itself intelligible, while the grounded depends on the ground for its existence.[28] Being, in this regard, is not one but many. The multiplicity of the grounded is based on the oneness of the ground. This describes Being as equivocal, as something used ambiguously in more than one sense (*tashkik al-wujud*).[29]

The systematic ambiguity of Being represents the truth of Being as becoming and is also systematic and a perpetual progression without repeating itself. It is an intentional progress from the more indeterminate to the more determinate or concrete mode of Being. Thus, Being is a unitary ground that manifests itself in a variety of modes and gradations, vertically as well as horizontally. The modes of Being are different from one another in terms of prior and posterior, perfection and imperfection, strength and weakness.[30] As a consequence, Being is neither unity nor diversity, but unity in diversity. The degrees of diversity are different in intensity and perfection. Being continues beyond this diversity without ceasing to be a unity. To elucidate this point, Mulla Sadra utilized the Sufi interpretation of the unveiling of God (*al-tajalli*). From God, all modes of Being flow constantly in all realms of the microcosm and to the prime matter, which is capable only of accepting forms. In this way

Mulla Sadra conjoins a multi-dimensional conception of reality itself, which has become an open field, with possibilities. His ontology is, thereby, intended to be opposed to the monolithic system.

Since Being is equivocal and the only reality, it acts as the principles of identity and difference. The modes of Being are identical in their inner reality but different in terms of prior and posterior, perfection and imperfection, strength and weakness. This relationship between these two principles of Being becomes clear when the modes of Being are interpreted as gradations in terms of less and more perfect. For example, plants are less perfect than animals and animals less perfect than human beings. Being, therefore, has two different poles of perfection, but at the same time it can be achieved when Being shows itself as pure existence rather than essence.

Even at the level of regional ontology or ontic entities, the existence–essence dualism remains a mental factor. The systematic ambiguity of Being, as we see, is downward (*tanzil*), from pure to concrete modes of Being. This irreversible process, when it is understood in light of emanation, becomes problematic. Emanation, as a vertical systematic ambiguity, begins with the highest form of Being to the lowest. In this respect it cannot be seen as progress, but as a journey towards darkness and the unreal, while the systematic ambiguity of Being is an irreversible progress from less perfect to more perfect. In this case, it is not a journey towards the dark corners of existence, but rather a movement similar to the dialectic movement of *Geist* in Hegel's philosophy for accomplishing absoluteness. Only in this context of understanding it dialectically can the systematic ambiguity of Being be seen as progress.[31] Although Hegel, unlike Mulla Sadra, sees the world as rational and holds the view that human inquiry must grasp this rationality in order to have an adequate apprehension of reality, the dialectic movement of *Geist* shares commonality with the ambiguity of Being. This commonality, however, does not deny the fundamental ontological differences between Hegel and Mulla Sadra's thought. For Hegel, reality is a range of universal thought determinations or categories: 'Metaphysics is nothing but the range of universal thought determinations and is as it were diamond-net into which we bring every thing in order to make it intelligible.'[32] In considering reality as 'the range of universal thought determinations', Hegel lapses into the 'darkness of illusion' or 'nihilism' in the Heideggerian sense.

For Aristotle and Muslim peripatetic thinkers, substance, unlike accident, is unchangeable. Substance cannot become more or less substance. We can think of change in quality or of an object's becoming more or less white, but a substance such as an animal cannot become more or less animal. The species 'animal', despite changing qualities, remains the same. Keeping substance aloof from change and from all accidental qualities under the sway of change is, for Mulla Sadra, again based on the illusion of subject–object dualism, which he refutes. Since this dualism is a mental factor, the dynamic character

of Being should be described as a substantial change (*al-haraka al-jawhariyyah*), according to which everything is continuously transformed. Such transformation implies that change is not limited to the four accidental categories of quality, quantity, place and position. In addition, there is a more fundamental change, that of substance itself.[33] Under the influence of change, Being transforms itself without losing its identity or unity. This transformation should be understood in the light of the principles of identity and difference mentioned earlier. Based on this view, Being passes through infinite accidental forms and substantial changes in an evolutionary manner.

From this survey of Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the primacy of Being, we see that his turn is as significant to Western thought as was Martin Heidegger's. Unfortunately, Mulla Sadra has received little attention in the West. This, to a great extent, as Nasr remarks, is due to the fact that the works of this Muslim thinker, unlike those of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, were not translated into Latin.[34] Mulla Sadra's ontology is important for understanding the development of Muslim philosophy in the post Ibn Sinan era. It brings a new philosophical insight in dealing with the nature of reality and creates a major transition from essentialism to existentialism.

Mulla Sadra's ontological turn is dealt with in this book in six chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the nature of this investigation and outlines the conflict between the doctrines of the primacy of Being and the primacy of essence. Chapter Two explores the philosophy of Suhrawardi and his doctrine of the primacy of essence. It discusses his arguments justifying this doctrine and the influence of the doctrine on the Islamic intellectual life in Isfahan. It also explains Suhrawardi's interpretation of the history of philosophy and Plato's influence on Suhrawardi's metaphysics, which has great significance for understanding Mulla Sadra's ontology and for comparing Mulla Sadra's ontology with that of Heidegger. Chapter Three deals with the development of the Isfahan school of philosophical thought during the Safawid dynasty. Mulla Sadra was a student of that school. Chapter Three also explores the ideas of thinkers such as Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i, the Suhrawardi tradition in the school, the life and philosophical development of Mulla Sadra and the major changes in his metaphysical position, namely his turn to the doctrine of the primacy of Being. The chapter concludes with Mulla Sadra's influence on the subsequent philosophical development in Persia and other parts of the Muslim world, particularly the rise of the philosophical schools in Teheran and Sabzawar during the Qajar period.

Chapter Four focuses on Mulla Sadra's ontological turn and his doctrine of the primacy of Being. This is compared with the ontological enterprise of Heidegger. The similarities between them are explained on the ground of three points: their criticism of Platonism, the primacy of Being, and the shortcomings of the Aristotelian logic and rationalistic discourse for understanding the meaning of Being. Also explained is how Mulla Sadra's ontology

differs from that of Heidegger. Chapter Five investigates the nature of trans-substantial change as one of the central doctrines in Mulla Sadra's ontology and his interpretation of change as a clear departure from Platonism. Trans-substantial change is also compared with Hegel's and Bergson's understanding of the constant renewal of the world. The religious and philosophical consequences of this doctrine and its impact on the human understanding of truth, values and knowledge are considered.

Chapter Six explores Mulla Sadra's interpretation of knowledge by both the presence and the failure of the rationalistic apprehension of Being. Mulla Sadra's rejection of pure rationality and his reliance instead on intuition or mystic experience for knowing the inner reality of Being is explained. The analysis includes the nature and different kinds of intuitive knowledge (*al-idrak*), beginning from sense-perception to intellectual perception. Two major epistemological issues discussed by many Muslim philosophers apart from Mulla Sadra are also addressed in this chapter. These are the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible, and God's knowledge of the world. Mulla Sadra's analysis of these issues is a significant part of the chapter.

Chapter Seven crystallizes the book and presents the contribution of Mulla Sadra's philosophy to the development of intellectual life in the Muslim world. His significance is seen in terms of his ontology in dealing with the doctrine of the primacy of Being, the gradations and trans-substantial change of the modalities of Being, and finally the role of his metaphysics in determining the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible, which makes reality accessible to the human mind.

In interpreting Mulla Sadra's main philosophical doctrines I have tried to compare them with philosophical views and doctrines of some Western philosophers such as Hegel, Heidegger and Bergson. At a number of places the similarity between the existentialist views of this Muslim philosopher and the ontological enterprise of Heidegger are elucidated. It should also be remembered that Mulla Sadra and these Western philosophers, in particular Heidegger, not only come from different cultural background; their metaphysical objectives will remain parallel. I have used the original works of Mulla Sadra in Arabic and in working on this project over the last two years I have benefited from the writing of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Fazlur Rahman on Mulla Sadra in English. Although few works are published on Mulla Sadra in English, recently much interest has been shown in rereading of his philosophy. In 1913 Max Horten wrote *Das Philosophische System von Schirazi*. This was followed by Henry Corbin's edition of a selection of Mulla Sadra's writings in French. Thinkers such as William Chittick and Oliver Leaman have contributed articles on Mulla Sadra's epistemology in the *Journal of Transcendent Philosophy*, a special issue on Mulla Sadra (Vol. 1, No. 1, June 2000). In 1981 James Morris translated Mulla Sadra's *al-Hikma al-'Arshiyyah* (*The Wisdom of the Throne*) into English. Seyyed Hossein

Nasr, Hossein Ziai and Muhammad Abdul Haq have published articles on Mulla Sadra's life and aspects of his philosophy. However, the only systematic work to date in English is Fazlur Rahman's *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (1975). According to Nasr, this work is a rationalistic interpretation of Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy without recourse to the living oral tradition and consideration of the spiritual and Gnostic background of Mulla Sadra, which are significant for understanding his ideas. In 1992 Parviz Morewedge translated Mulla Sadra's *al-Mash'ir* into English, a work that summarizes Mulla Sadra's metaphysical system. An investigation into the philosophy of this Muslim thinker, as we see, is beset with some difficulties. Mulla Sadra's major philosophical work *Al-Asfar*, which presents his entire philosophical system, has not been translated into Persian and Urdu but not into English. With the exception of Fazlur Rahman's work no comprehensive book on his philosophy is available. In addition to this limitation in accessing Mulla Sadra's philosophy in English, his style of writing is sophisticated and complex. It covers a broad area of metaphysics, Gnosticism and theology. It deals with the views of Mulla Sadra's predecessors critically Mulla Sadra's new philosophical ideas are presented or constructed. Despite these difficulties it should be remembered that Mulla Sadra's philosophy is the product of the sixteenth century but quite relevant to our understanding of reality and contemporary society. His doctrine of the trans-substantial change and his views on novelty and constant transformation of history could play a profound role on our ethical as well as political life in the Muslim world.

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CHAPTER TWO

The School of Illuminationism and the Doctrine of the Primacy of Essence

Al-Ghazali's (1058–1111) polemic of rationalistic philosophy, along with the Seljuq dynasty's revival of Ash'ari Sunni theology, contributed to the eclipse of philosophical discourse in some parts of the Muslim world.[1] These two factors, however, did not disrupt the intellectual continuity of Shi'i twelfth century, Muslim philosophical thinking forged two different directions: the rationalistic discourse re-emerged under the influence of Aristotelian philosophy in Spain led by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Bajjah (1106–1139), Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185) and Ibn Rushd (1126–1198); and Illuminationism (*al-ishraqiyyah*) spread in Persia.

The school of Illuminationism, which is significant for our understanding of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, was founded by Shahab al-Din Yahya b. Habash b. Amirak Suhrawardi, known also as Shaykh al-Ishraq, the master of illumination. Suhrawardi's date of birth is not known precisely. We only know that he was born in Suhraward or 'Suhrabard', a Kurdish village between Zenjan and Bijar. According to Mulla Salih Ibrahimi, Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi was originally Kurdish and the nephew of Mulla Omer Suhrawardi, another Kurdish Muslim scholar from the same village and of Sunni-Islamic origin. Mulla Omer and Shahab al-Din also wrote poetry in Kurdish; some poems of the latter were published by Ibrahimi. It is also reported in *Nuzat al-arwah e rawzat al-afrah* by Shams al-Din Shahrazuri that 'Shuraward' was a Kurdish village.[2] In the tenth century, the village was destroyed by the Mongols. According to Noldeke and Marquart, its name derived from Suhrab, who was a Persian governor of Hira.[3] Today, Suhraward (*Suhrabard*) is located in the municipality of Azerbaijan in Iran. For this reason, some people, without knowing the ethnic make-up of the region, think that Suhrawardi was originally Turkish or Persian.

Shahrazuri states that Suhrawardi was born in 1166 or 1171.[4] Nasr also gives two dates. In one of his early works, Nasr says that Suhrawardi was born in 1153;[5] later, in his introduction to *Opera Metaphysica et Mystical*, he indicates that Suhrawadi was born in 1171.[6] After receiving an Islamic education, Suhrawardi travelled through Persia to Anatolia and Syria. He was a contemporary and classmate of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi; the two had studied under Shaykh Mujjad al-Din Jili and later under Zahi al-Din Qari in Isfahan. On one of his journeys from Damascus to Aleppo, the capital city of the Ayyubid Sunni dynasty,[7] Suhrawardi met Malik Zahir, the governor of Aleppo and the

son of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, who patronized him and engaged him in conversation on thorny philosophical and theological issues with a cluster of the *'ulama* in Aleppo.[8] Another reason for travelling to Aleppo – a centre of the new political conflict between Islam and Christendom – rather than to a peaceful region, might be seen in Suhrawardi's ethnic affiliation with the Ayyubi family.

The political situation in Syria at that time could be defined as crucial and in turmoil. The Shi'ite Muslims who had long ruled Syria and North Africa, particularly Egypt, lost their hegemony to the Sunni Muslims. Salaha al-Din destroyed the Fatimid Shi'i dynasty in Egypt and Syria. In addition to this internal conflict between Sunnism and Shi'ism over political hegemony, the Crusaders appeared as an eminent external force against the Muslim world. Salah al-Din Ayyubi, who represented the Sunni political hegemony, was seen as the only one with authority to protect the interest of Sunni Islamic civilization from these external and internal rivalries. Under such unfavourable circumstances for the development of philosophy, it seems that, by travelling to the heart of this turmoil, Suhrawardi chose a wrong direction and time to advocate his philosophical ideas. The Sunni Islamic world, facing threats from Christendom represented by the Crusaders and from Shi'ism, was not resilient to change and could not tolerate innovation. The Sunni *'ulama*, considering themselves the guardians and protectors of Islamic faith and identity, were looking at any philosophical inclination or intellectual contention with suspicion. Suhrawardi's philosophical ideas, in the court of Malik Zahir, were seen in this political context; on them were visited the hostility and rejection of the institution of the *'ulama*. The *'ulama* branded Suhrawardi's ideas as heretical and asked Malik Zahir to put the young philosopher to death. Malik Zahir was reluctant to do this against his master and friend, so the *'ulama* approached Salah al-Din, who ordered his son to act. Suhrawardi was finally executed in 1208 at the age of thirty-eight. According to Shahrazuri, there are several accounts of his death. One reports that he was starved to death in prison. Another states that Suhrawardi himself fasted until he died. Some held the view that he was suffocated, executed or thrown from the wall of the fortress and then burned.[9]

The term '*ishraq*', which is Arabic for 'illumination', was used before Suhrawardi by Ibn Sina in his *Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyan*, where he talks about the oriental wisdom as a superior source of knowledge to the rationalistic discourse. Suhrawardi was aware of the significance of Ibn Sina's view but believed that Ibn Sina was unable to comprehend the importance of oriental cognition as he did not have the proper epistemological tools or access to the sources of *ishraqi* wisdom (Gnosticism). He states in his treatise *Risaleh safari Simurgh* that seeking the Truth through rationalistic discourse is like seeking the sun with a lamp.[10]

In Suhrawardi's view, the history of philosophy did not begin with Thales in 600 BC. Instead Hermes is considered by this Muslim thinker to be the

father of illuminative philosophical thinking or wisdom. Hermes was followed by sages from Greece, Persia and the Muslim world. In Greece, this type of philosophical thinking came to an end with Aristotle, who replaced the cognitive tool of illumination with the rationalistic discourse. But the illuminative philosophy continued to develop in Persia, and after the advent of Islam was continued by Muslim Sufis such as Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, Abu Salih Tustari, Abu Yazid Bistami, Mansur al-Hallaj, Abu Hassan Kharraqain and finally Suhrawardi himself.

What is important for us in understanding the history of philosophy described by Suhrawardi and for developing our argument is that this Muslim thinker acknowledged the connection between Plato's thought and his own metaphysics. The depiction of this connection is significant when we try to compare Mulla Sadra's metaphysical background and criticism of Illuminationism and Heidegger's interpretation of 'nihilism' in the West by tracing them back to Plato. To demonstrate similarities between Mulla Sadra's opposition to Illuminationism, in particular the doctrine of the primacy of essence, and Heidegger's negative attitude towards nihilism, we need to highlight the relationship between Plato's metaphysics and Illuminationism. We begin by explaining how Suhrawardi, in his introduction to *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, refers explicitly to Plato and the place of his ideas in the development of the illuminative philosophy,

> In all I have said about the science of lights and that which is not based upon it, I have been assisted by those who have travelled the path of God. This science is the very intuition of the inspired and illumined Plato, the guide and master of philosophy, and of those who came before him from the time of Hermes, 'the father of philosophy' upon Plato's time, including such mighty pillars of philosophy as Empedocles, Pythagoras, and others.[11]

It is customary in the history of Western philosophy to begin with Thales (a Milesian philosopher of 640–546 BC) as the father of Western philosophy. To understand the development of Greek philosophy we must also distinguish between the pre-Socratic and the post-Socratic periods. But for Suhrawardi, philosophy began with Hermes and Plato rather than with Thales. For Suhrawardi, this was the demarcation between two stages of development in the history of this type of philosophical thinking. The science of light or the illuminative philosophy came down from Hermes to the sages of ancient Iran and Egypt and thence to Plato. Greek, ancient Iranian, Egyptian and Islamic sources have become the foundation of this type of philosophy. In dealing with these historical roots and sources, Suhrawardi mentions the ancient Iranian religion, Zoroastrianism, several times. But as John Walbridge argues, this in no way indicates a revival of pre-Islamic religious belief or an endorsement of metaphysical dualism in Suhrawardi's philosophical system.[12] This Muslim thinker also describes

the original form of Zoroastrianism as monotheism, to which King Gushtasp later introduced dualism.[13] He believes that Zoroastrianism as a religion is different from the teachings of the Zoroastrian sages that he follows, such as Kiumarth, Faridun and Kaikhusraw, who guided their community towards the light by their illuminated wisdom, and who were in turn different from the so-called Manichaeans.[14]

As far as Greek thought is concerned, Plato's metaphysics and his allegory of the cave were an inspiration for Suhrawardi.[15] He sees the ascent of the human being from the cave towards the light as a real liberation from the domain of shadows of the contingent world. Attaining the Truth is determined by this journey of the seeker of the Truth who attempts to liberate him/herself from the dogma of the cave and look into the light. In Plato's philosophy, those who liberate themselves from the shadows of the cave and are unshackled will be able to see the sun. In his short treatise *Al-Qissa al-Ghurbat al-Gharbiyyah* (*Story of the Occidental Exile*), Suhrawardi pursues Plato's allegory with some modification. In this work, the seeker of the Truth, like the prisoner freed from the cave, must undertake the spiritual journey of his/her liberation from the occident, which is the world of darkness and material existence, to the orient, the world of light and archangels. In Suhrawardi's allegory, human beings are not shackled in a cave but are imprisoned at the bottom of a well and left in total darkness. These prisoners were originally from Yemen (a land between the occident and the orient of the Muslim world), and were sent into exile to Qirawan, a city in Tunis, in the west of the orient. Like the prisoner unshackled from the cave, the escapee from the well will return to the well after seeing the light of the orient because he has not discarded all his bonds.

In the context of Plato's metaphysical analysis, according to Suhrawardi, the rationalistic approach of Aristotle broke the chain of continuity of the Platonic philosophical tradition. Discursive knowledge and rationalistic thinking replaced intuitive knowledge. For this reason and due to the dominance of Plato's metaphysics in the history of Illuminationist philosophy, thinkers like al-Jurjani define the adherents of Illuminationism as "philosophers whose master was Plato'.[16] In *al-Talwihat*, Suhrawardi, besides discussing his doctrine of the principality of essence, presents a critical study of Aristotle's categories. First he argues that the categories were discovered by Archytas (a Pythagorean thinker) before Aristotle. Second he reduces their number from ten to four and adds 'motion' as a new category.[17] In this work, Suhrawardi encounters Aristotle (the master of discursive knowledge) in a state between dreaming and being awake; it is in this state that their discussion on the origin of Illuminationism, the distinction between discursive and intuitive knowledge, takes place.[18]

Suhrawardi not only incorporated Plato's metaphysics into his own but he also considered his philosophy of illumination as the continuation of

Platonism. He recognizes Plato not as a philosopher but as one of the masters of Illuminationism:

> Plato and his companions showed plainly that they believed the Maker of the universe and the world of intellect to be the light when they said that the pure light is the world of intellect. Of himself, Plato said that in certain of his spiritual conditions he would shed his body and become free from matter. Then he would see light and splendour within his essence. He would ascend to that all-encompassing divine cause and would seem to be located and suspended in it, beholding a mighty light in that lofty and divine place.[19]

At another place, Suhrawardi compares Plato's philosophy with the allusions of the prophets,[20] and describes himself not as the founder of Illuminationism but as a follower of masters such as Hermes and Plato.[21] In classifying seekers of knowledge, Suhrawardi also places Plato among those who possess perfect discursive knowledge and illumination. A philosopher like Plato, in possession of these two faculties of knowledge, is the vicegerent of God and a person wise enough to be a leader or ruler of society and a philosopher king. By contrast, the rationalist philosophers such as Aristotle, proficient only in discursive knowledge, are not suitable candidates for such elevated positions in society.

It is worth mentioning that, although it does not have a direct relationship with the essence of things, Suhrawardi still considers discursive knowledge to be one of the cognitive tools. But for Suhrawardi, a true philosopher is one who is capable, like Plato, of possessing discursive as well as intuitive knowledge and using both, in particular the latter, for understanding the nature of reality and knowing the Truth. Suhrawardi's opposition to Aristotle, and to Muslim Peripatetic thinkers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, can thus be elucidated in the light of Aristotle's metaphysical position, his criticism of Plato, and his reliance on discursive knowledge in his epistemology. Aristotle's philosophy is seen as a philosophical tendency hostile towards Platonism and as a philosophical position yielding a distorted notion of reality.

Plato assumed that the plurality of individual objects could be unified under common essences or Ideas.[22] The essences have their own reality as objective essences rather than mere universal concepts that exist only in thinking. To Plato, referring to the universal concept or quiddity of an object also means referring to its objective essence. Besides, essences do not rely on individual objects to exist, because they are transcendent and spatially detached from them. The essences constitute the reality of individual objects but do not reside in them in the sensible world.

How does the human mind know and reach these transcendent essences? In the *Symposium*, Plato describes a procedure or 'itinerary' for this. For example, one can arrive at realizing the essence of 'beauty' by ascending

from beautiful objects to the pure notion of beauty and thence to the form of this essence, which is universal and self-subsistent.[23] Individual objects, which are detached from these essences, are objects of 'opinion' and 'sense-experience'. In contrast, the essences are not in the domain of 'opinion' and 'sense-experience' but objects that can be 'known'. Here and in the Platonic context, true knowledge corresponds to the apprehension or intelligibility of the essences when the human mind is turned upwards in the method of ascent.[24] This kind of knowledge and way of knowing became in the *Republic* a prerogative of the philosophers who seek to turn their minds upwards in order to see the universal transcendent essences. A philosopher should not be interested in a multiplicity of individual objects of the sensible world but in their unified essences or the source of their existence in the ideal world. For Suhrawardi, this upward turn or the sight of the sun in Plato's theory of cognition is illumination (*al-ishraq*) and the source of true knowledge through which the human mind can apprehend the transcendent reality.

There is more than a convergence of views between Platonism and Illuminationism; in my opinion the latter has a parasitical relationship with the former. Further similarity between these two philosophical schools can be found in Plato's analogy of the idea of Good with Light. Among all essences, the Form of the Good is both supreme and the source of all other essences. This notion of the Good is also compared to the sun or the 'Light', shining upon all other essences and making them visible and intelligible:

> This, then, which imparts truth to the things that are known and the power of knowing to the knower, you may affirm to be the Form of the good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth, and you may conceive it as being known, but while knowledge and truth are both beautiful, you will be right in thinking it other and fairer than these. And as in the other world it is right to think light and sight sun-like, but not right to think them the sun, so here it is right to think both knowledge and truth like the good, but not right to think either of them the good. The state or nature of the good must be honoured still more highly.[25]

The Form of the Good is to an extent the foundation of all other essences. Their existence and intelligibility are thinkable only in their relation to the Good. In understanding this relationship Heidegger remarks that 'the highest idea, although itself barely visible, is what makes possible both being and unhiddenness, i.e. it is what empowers being and unhiddenness as what they are. The highest idea, therefore, is this empowering; the empowering for being which as such gives itself simultaneously with the empowerment of unhiddenness as occurrence.'[26] This empowering is the characteristic and the essential quality of the Form of the Good, which corresponds to the symbol of light. Similarly for Suhrawardi the world is made up of contingent light, which depends for its existence on the ultimate light or the Light of lights (*nur al-anwar*): 'Accident

light is not light in itself, since its existence is in another. Thus, it can only be light due to another. The incorporeal pure light is light in itself. Therefore, everything that is light in itself is incorporeal pure light.'[27]

The world is indebted to the Light of lights or the form of the Good not only for being visible and comprehended but also for what it is. The coming into being and ceasing to be of everything in the contingent world is empowered by the Light of lights. In the realm below the empowering Light there are four forms of light: immaterial, luminous, accidents and bodies. The immaterial light is the cause of the other three lights and is also a self-conscious substantial light. God, the intellects of the spheres, human intellect and animal soul are all immaterial lights, which cause the other three forms of light to exist. Since the contingent lights belong to a lower ontological division, they are less bright. They also share the same essence, as all of them spring from the same source. They are also gradations of the same reality but different in their intensity and perfection in brightness. This ground for making a distinction between one contingent light and another is not the realization of their '*differentia*' or 'accidents'. It is due to their rank in the hierarchy of emanation. Two contingent lights are different because they vary in perfection or the intensity of light. Human beings, for example, are more perfect than animals. They both belong to two different ranks of existence. The vertical emanation from the Light of lights goes from the Intellects of the celestial sphere to the individualization of light in accidents and bodies. Based on the relationship between the immaterial light and the other three forms, the immaterial light is divided into dominating and managing light. The former functions like the Platonic Forms and the latter is the individual soul in an individual body:

> Even though the managing light comes from one of the exalted dominating lights and accepts many illuminations, it is not like a dominating light in perfection of its substance. The dominating light brings into being the managing incorporeal light only due to perfections of the barrier acquired from the mighty lords and in order to manage it in the way appropriate for controlling barriers of finite power. By this, it strengthens its connection with the barrier.[28]

In explaining this relationship among various forms of light, Suhrawardi thinks in line with Plato, but at the same time he does not repeat the Platonic doctrine of Ideas without alteration. For him, the dominating light is concerned with species. Every species that exists as a dominating light has a universal form called 'Lord of the Species'. These Lords of Species or Forms are not universal essences shared by all particulars. They exist at a higher realm and are independent of particulars. Their universality is determined by the same relationship to all particulars of the same species. The Lords of Species are the causes of the particulars and are universals in the sense that they have this causal relationship to all particulars of the same species. For

example, the universal Form of 'cat' has the same causal relationship to all individual cats in the material world. This can be seen as a difference between Suhrawardi's understanding of the universal Forms and that of Plato. Another essential difference to be noted here is that Suhrawardi, unlike Plato, believes that the domain of the Forms is beyond the cognitive capacity of reason and is to be apprehended intuitively. In this way, Suhrawardi followed Plato but at the same time offered his own point of view and contribution to the doctrine of the Forms. He accepts the doctrine but thinks of the Forms as causes of individual beings, not as a universal predicate shared by all of them. The question that arises here is how a multiplicity of contingent lights can arise from the simple and indivisible nature of the Light of lights.

Suhrawardi found a Neoplatonic answer to this question: from the Light of lights emanates the lower levels of contingent lights, the angelic order, and the archetypes. The Light of lights is the single origin of all things and gives constant illumination to them. It is the highest in the metaphysical hierarchy of being, not only in terms of rank but also as the most perfect source and origin of all contingent lights. The emanated realms, unlike the Light of lights, are different in their degree of perfection and remoteness from their illuminating source. They are either self-subsistent or dependent on something else. In addition to this classification they can be distinguished by their degree of self-consciousness. A self-conscious being is either self-subsistent, as in the case of the Light of lights, the angels and the human consciousness, or depends on something other than itself for its self-awareness, as in the case of stars or fire. Another division of the lights is based on their degree of self-awareness. A light is either self-aware of or obvious to itself. The self-aware light is either self-subsistent or depends on something other than itself in order to become aware of itself. The classification continues and the differences between all things at various levels of this hierarchy of light depend on the intensity of light manifested in each kind of being. But the illuminating source or the Light of lights is not affected by this multiplicity of its own manifestation and gradation:

> Multiplicity cannot conceivably result from the Light of lights in its unity, nor can any darkness be conceived to result from a dusky substance or state, nor yet two lights result from the Light of lights in Its unity. Therefore, that which first results from the Light of lights must be a single incorporeal light. This then cannot be distinguished from the Light of lights by any dark state acquired from the Light of lights. This would imply the multiplicity of aspects in the Light of lights in contradiction to the demonstration that the lights, particularly the incorporeal lights, do not differ in their realities. Therefore, the Light of lights and the first light that results from it are only to be distinguished by perfection and deficiency.[29]

The descending process of emanation of the multiplicity of contingent lights from a single indivisible source can best be understood against the hierarchy

of being in the ontological system of other Muslim emanationists such as al-Farabi (*c*. 870–950). According to this Muslim philosopher, the first emanation from the 'One' was not a multiplicity of contingent beings but the first intellect capable of knowing the 'One' as well as itself. The second intellect emanates from the first intellect and the third from the second intellect, which gives rise to the sphere of the fixed stars. This process of emanation continues until the emanation of the tenth intellect is reached, and with it the corresponding spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury and the moon. At the lowest level of emanation lies the 'prime matter'. This contains the four elements of water, air, fire and earth. These include minerals, plants, animals and finally human beings.[30] Similarly, from the Light of lights emanates the first light, and from this the incorporeal light and barrier. This emanation continues until there are the nine spheres and the series of lights from which no other incorporeal light emanates. Suhrawardi also believes that emanation is a pre-eternal process because the Light of lights neither changes nor withers away.[31] His analysis of human existence is also based on his understanding of reality. As a thinker who believes in the reality of the incorporeal realm, he divides human beings into two parts: incorporeal (soul) and corporeal (body). These two parts represent light and darkness. Nor is a relationship between them necessary. The incorporeal soul, although attached to the body, is independent and survives without embodiment. The corporeality of human existence has at the same time an attachment to darkness, which is a barrier that foils the human soul's access to knowledge of the reality. Identifying the human soul with light and the body with darkness represents for Suhrawardi two aspects of human existence, which are essentially distinct and belong to two different ontological ranks. The human soul is also in constant struggle to keep itself aloof from the influence of the body in order to reach perfection, which can be obtained by giving up worldly pleasure and the demands of corporeal life. This is a journey in human life towards the abode of pure light and the Sufi path of self-purification and elevation.[32]

As mentioned earlier, Suhrawardi acknowledges his debt to Plato, under whose influence he rejects the question of the primacy of being and treats being as nothing, and develops arguments for the primacy of essence (*asalat al-mahiyyah*). For him, something exists when its essence becomes cognizant; its reality relies on its essence. The arguments in vindication of this metaphysical position rotate around the philosophical conviction that existence is conceptual and has no reality of its own in the external world. It has no representation outside the human mind. Before explaining Suhrawardi's main arguments it is important to mention some considerations discussed by him in Section Three of the Third Discourse ('Concerning the Illuminationsit Judgments on Certain Points') in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*. These considerations are:

- Against Muslim Aristotelian–Neoplatonic thinkers he argues that 'There is nothing in existence, which is itself the quiddity of existence; for as soon as we conceive its concept, we may wonder whether or not it has existence.'[33] This will eventually result in an infinite regress, because existence would have another existence and so on.
- If we think that essence has existence, then it should have a relation to it. This relation would also need existence, which stands in a relation to the previous relation and so on. This would continue to infinity.[34]
- If existence were in entities and were not an essence, then it would become a state in them. In this case existence would become dependent on them. 'Thus its locus would be actualized, but it would exist before its locus. Its locus could not be actualized simultaneously with it, since its locus would exist with the existence, not by the existence – which is absurd.'[35]
- According to Muslim Aristotelian–Neoplatonic thinkers, the locus is prior to an accident. Thus, as pointed out by Suhrawardi, the existence would be prior to existence; this is not only absurd, but also impossible.[36]
- Muslim Aristotelian–Neoplatonic thinkers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina believed that 'existence' was added to 'essence' of an entity as an accident. But, according to Suhrawardi, if we think of existence as an accident, it should subsist in its locus. In this case existence would need its locus for its realization. Since the locus is existent, then its subsistence would be circular, and this is again absurd for Suhrawardi.

Let us now turn to Suhrawardi's main argument for the primacy of essence. In this argument he tries to prove that existence is either a universal concept or a particular. If it is a universal concept and shared like any other universal concept by all particular existents, existence remains in the domain of thinking as something conceptual. If existence is a particular, it is dependent on its essence. Let us say that 'existence' is a universal concept because all things that exist do so equally – or they share existence. In this case, 'existence' as a universal concept becomes a universal nature. But there are other universal concepts such as 'blackness' or 'whiteness' of the same nature. Could we say that existence, like these universal concepts, is a universal essence? If the answer to this question is 'yes', then existence becomes a universal concept; otherwise we have to think of it as a particular entity.[37] If existence is thought to be a particular entity, it still remains a mental concept, and essence becomes real in which a particular existence is actualized. A particular existence is nothing more than its essence. As Suhrawardi argues, 'existence' is conceived in respect to a particular existence and the particular existence is also equivalent to essence. Existence is thus contingent on a particular existence. To clarify this metaphysical position Suhrawardi states:

> Next we argue that if blackness is non-existent, then its existence is not actual. Therefore its existence is not existent, since its existence is also non-existent. If we do intellect existence and judge that it is not existent, then the concept of existence is distinct from the concept of existent. We might say that blackness, which we had taken as non-existent, now exists and that its existence was not yet actual but then becomes actual. If so, the actuality of the existence would not be the existence itself, and the existence would have existence. This same argument applies to the existence of existence, and so on to infinity. But a simultaneous ordered infinity of attributes is absurd.[38]

What we understand from this is that 'existence' cannot be a primordial ontological condition for a thing. That primordial ontological condition is 'essence', which occupies a primary position on which the existence of all things relies and which supports the contingency of existence.

In Suhrawardi's philosophy 'essence' is also equated with 'light'. God, who is the Essence of the essences, is the Light of lights. Here we find a lucid distinction between the Light of lights as the cause and empowering light of all lights and the contingent or caused and empowered lights. The Light of lights cannot be thought of as another contingent light; all contingent lights are dependent on something other than them to exist and the Light of lights is their final cause, which has no cause. It is that being that does not fail to exist and so is necessary. This argument, which is originally Aristotelian, is also used by Muslim theologians and philosophers in a variety of forms to prove the existence of God. The Light of lights provides constant illumination and brings all contingent lights into existence. These lights are either self-subsistent, for example incorporeal lights, or they are accidental and their subsistence relies on something other than themselves.

The individual self, which is a contingent light, is more illuminated as it nears its source. This increase in the intensity of illumination occurs with the abolition of the ontological distance between the Light of lights and the self. Suhrawardi calls this proximity to the Light of lights 'presence', the awareness of which is 'knowledge by presence', which is considered to be the most reliable source of cognition. 'Knowledge by presence' or intuitive knowledge, however, had a significant impact on Mulla Sadra's epistemology, which is discussed in Chapter Six.

The thinkers who were responsible for the early transmission of Suhrawardi's ideas and were known for their writings on Illuminationism were Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Shahrazuri (d. 1288), Sa'ad b. Mansur Ibn Kammunah (d. 1284) and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi (d. 1311). Al-Shahrazuri is considered to be the first major commentator on Suhrawardi's thought. Ibn Kammunah wrote on Suhrawardi in *al-Talwihat*, a book studied widely by the advocates of Illuminationism in Persia. Al-Shirazi incorporated Illuminationism into Ibn Sina's ontology and the doctrine of the Unity of Being of Ibn 'Arabi.[39] From the thirteenth century onwards, other thinkers,

such as Muhammad b. Zayn al-Din b. Ibrahim Asha'i (d. 1479) and Giyath al-Din Mansur Dashtaki (d. 1541), wrote under the influence of Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy.

Suhrawardi's Illuminationism changed philosophical tradition in the Muslim world by bridging the gulf between Gnosticism and rationalism. It left a great mark on the development of intellectual life in the Muslim world. Its influence can be found in Persia and the Indian subcontinent to the present day. The magnitude of this influence will be discussed in the next chapter on the Safawid period in Isfahan, when Mulla Sadra came under the sway of this philosophical tradition at the beginning of his philosophical training and vocation.

CHAPTER THREE

The School of Isfahan and Mulla Sadra's Departure from Suhraward's Tradition

Suhrawardi died young but the impact of his philosophy on Muslim intellectual life was outstanding. He advocated the doctrine of the primacy of essence and established harmony between discursive and intuitive knowledge, with an emphasis on the latter as a reliable source of knowing the Truth. The predominance of Suhrawardi's philosophy was greatly felt in Persia and his school, namely Illuminationism, flourished in Isfahan during the Safawid dynasty (1051–1732), attracting a number of Shi'ite thinkers, including Mulla Sadra. To understand the popularity of Illuminationism during that period it is helpful to discern the origin and development of the Safawid dynasty and to explain why the Safawid rulers patronized this type of philosophy in their dynasty.

The Safawid was originally a Sufi order whose founder, Shaykh Safi al-Din (1252–1334), was a Sunni Sufi master descended from a Kurdish family in north-western Iran.[1] Nasr, in his article 'The School of Isfahan', does not mention the ethnic and sectarian origin of the order, but he gives the title Ardibili to the founder because the family of Safi al-Din had settled at Ardibil and Shaykh Safi al-Din died there.[2] At another place, Nasr acknowledges that the order belonged originally to Sunni Islam as an offshoot of the Qadiriyyah order founded in Baghdad.[3] According to Percy Sykes, however, the dynasty traces its descent from Musa al-Kazim (745–799), the seventh Shi'i imam for the Twelvers. Sykes does not say whether this Shi'i genealogy of the order was given by Shaykh Safi al-Din or was fabricated at the later stage of the encroachment of the order into Shi'i Imamism.

The political orientation of the order and the transformation of the sect to Shi'i Islam began with Shaykh Junayd (d. 1460), the grandson of Shaykh Safi al-Din, and his son 'Ali (d. 1496). Shaykh Junayd advocated the idea of *jihad* (holy war) against non-Muslims as well as corrupt Muslim rulers in Persia. He recruited supporters from Turkish and Kurdish tribes and called them *Qizilbash* (those who wore red headgear with twelve gores for the twelve Shi'i imams). But the total conversion of the order to Shi'i Islam and the establishment of the dynasty took place at the time of Isma'il (1487–1524), also known as Shah Isma'il, the grandson of Junayd who marched on Tabriz in 1501 and designated himself a king (*shah*).[4] The conversion of the order by Shah Isma'il, as it is seen in the political history of the order, provided a *terra firma* for consolidating Shah Isma'il's own political hegemony. Relying on the notion of the messianic or the Shi'i doctrine of the imamate, Shah Isma'il

claimed to be *imam al-muntazr* (Awaited One) or the Mahdi. On this matter, Nasr asserts that the veneration of 'Ali in the inner tendency of the order was responsible for this conversion:

> Both Shah Ni'mat Allah who came to Persia from Aleppo, and Shaikh Safi al-Din from Ardabil were at first Sufis of Sunni background such as the Shaziliyya and Qadiriyya brotherhoods. But the inner belief in the *valayat* of 'Ali gradually transformed the outer form of the orders as well into thoroughly Shi'i organizations, although the inward structure of these orders, being sufi, remained above the Shi'i–Sunni distinctions.[5]

In my opinion Shah Isma'il combined political and divine authority by seeking absolute power and devotion from his followers. This claim, however, was challenged by the followers after Shah Isma'il's defeat by the Sunni Ottoman Empire during the reign of Selim I (r. 1512–1520) at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514.[6] To neutralize the tension and avoid humiliation before his followers the defeated Shah Isma'il adopted a softer theological position by making Twelver Shi'ism the official religion of the state. He also began to force the Sunni population to convert in the areas he controlled in Persia. Many Shi'i scholars such as Shaykh 'Ali b. Abd al-'Ali Karaki, Shaykh Baha al-Din 'Amili and Ni'mat Allah Jaza'iri were invited from Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain to participate in the establishment of Shi'i educational institutions in Persia. Further to this, the Safawid state embarked on a plan to eliminate the rival sects, in particular those with antagonistic attitude towards Shi'ism. The messianic–extremist Shi'i sects and Sufi orders such as Naqshabandiyyah and Khalwatiyyah were banned; Sunni Muslims and other religious minority groups were persecuted. It was during this time that Persia was transformed from a predominantly Sunni Islam to a Shi'i Islamic dynasty.[7]

There were, however, three groups that contributed to the foundation of the Safawid state and its development: the Qizilbash, who represented the popular Sufi movement; the institution of the *'ulama* or salaried clergy; and finally, at the top, the ruler. The first group was gradually suppressed for political reasons and the second group drew closer to the royal court. With the advent of Shah Tahmasib (1524–1576), the state openly supported the *'ulama* against the Qizilbash and other Sufi orders. Shah Abbas I (1571–1629) recruited many *'ulama* in different administrative positions. But his support for the scholars of Gnosticism and real Sufis never ceased. The development of philosophy in Isfahan is indebted to Shah Abbas's patronage of scholars of theology and Gnosticism. It was during his reign that the philosophy of illumination received official recognition and was advocated by some influential Shi'i thinkers who remained close to the monarch. As we see, on one side the Safawid dynasty stood hostile towards Sunni thought and Sufism, while on the other side it did not curtail the development of illuminative philosophy of Suhrawardi and theological debates on various religious matters.[8]

This Shi'i state, like other Islamic states, was supportive of a philosophical discourse favourable to the metaphysical foundation of its political power. Intellectual endeavour was consequently subject to the favour of despotic rulers who were either for or against it. This was characteristic of the political environment in which ideas were shaped in the Muslim world. Philosophy, unlike religious discourse, never enjoyed a long-term engagement and relationship to the state and was forced by the clergy to stand outside the educational institutions most of the time. Nevertheless, there were reasons for the revival of Illuminationism during the Safawid dynasty. As mentioned earlier, the Safawid was a gnostic Sufi order that was transformed into a political movement. Unlike other Islamic dynasties it was not based purely on military insurgence. It was expected to incline towards a type of metaphysics that could easily be manipulated for political ends. Illuminationism, as Amin Razavi remarks, provided such a philosophical foundation for the political convictions of the dynasty.[9] The contribution of some great Shi'i thinkers with political influence was to promote Suhrawardi's philosophy; this played a remarkable role in having Illuminationism recognized as an influential philosophical trend of the time.

During the Safawid dynasty, Muslim thinkers in Persia continued the post Ibn Sinan intellectual tradition. They were able to establish systems of thought that were neither purely philosophical nor gnostic but a combination of both. They intended to develop a theosophical tradition rather than a rationalistic philosophy based purely on discursive knowledge. Thinkers such as Ghyas al-Din Mansur and later Mir Damad interpreted Ibn Sina's Peripatetic doctrine in the light of the illuminative philosophy of Suhrawardi. Other thinkers, such as Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, Sa'ad al-Din Hamuya, Aziz al-Din Nasafi, Fakhr al-Din Araqi, Auhad al-Din Kirmani and Abdul Rahman Jami, were influenced by Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the unity of being. They incorporated this gnostic doctrine into their philosophical systems.[10] In the fourteenth century, Sayyid Haider Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur and Rajab Basri, whose theosophical doctrines were developed under the influence of Ibn 'Arabi, contributed to the integration of Gnosticism in Shi'i Islam during the Safawid period. Sayyid Sharif Jurjani and Jalal al-Din Dawani also tried to bridge the gulf between philosophy and theology.[11]

Among these Muslim Shi'i thinkers, Mir Damad is of great importance because, with Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i, he belonged to the first generation who were the main thinkers behind the establishment of the School of Isfahan. The name of this school was employed recently by Henri Corbin, Nasr and Ashtiyani. Corbin includes Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra and Qadi Sa'id Qummin as its main figures. Nasr gives a longer list of names but emphasizes Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i as the forerunners of the school. These three thinkers were also patronized by Shah Tahmasp and Shah Abbas, the Safawid ruler. It is reported that Shah Abbas visited them

frequently at their place of residence and developed a kind of friendship with them.[12]

Mir Burhan al-Din Muhammad Baqir Damad was known as Mir Damad and was also given the title of 'Third Teacher' following Aristotle and al-Farabi.[13] Another title by which he was known was Sayyid al-Afdil, 'Master of the Most Learned'.[14] This Muslim thinker was born in 1561 in Ashtarabad. His father, Mir Shams al-Din, was the son-in-law of Shaykh 'Ali b. Abd al-'Ali Karaki, a distinguished Shi'i cleric (d. 1538) and the author of the theological discoure *al-Najmiyyah* and several other commentaries on religious subjects. Shaykh 'Ali Karaki migrated to Persia after the establishment of the Safawid dynasty and during the reign of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–1576) enjoyed patronage and power. Mir Damad gained his education in the major Shi'i cities of Persia. He studied philosophy, transmitted sciences (*'ulum al-naqliyyah*) and natural sciences and closely studied Ibn Sina's philosophical texts. He became the leading authority on philosophy, theology, jurisprudence and natural sciences. During the time of Shah Abbas he went to Isfahan to teach, where he attracted a large number of disciples. Among them were Mulla Khalil Qazwini, Sayyid Ahmed 'Alawi, Qutb al-Din Ashkiwari and Mulla Sadra.[15] Mir Damad wrote various religious and philosophical titles in Arabic and Persian; for example *Qabasat*, *Taqdisat*, *Taqim al-imam*, *al-Sirat al-mustaqim* and *al-Ufuq al-mubin* were in Arabic. He also wrote *Jazarat* and *Sirat al-muntaha* in Persian. These works included discussions on philosophical matters such as being, time, eternity, the relationship between eternal and temporal, creation and God's knowledge of particulars. He also wrote poems under the pen name *Ishraq*. At the age of twenty, Mir Damad was recognized as a philosopher and was admired by people in the intellectual circles of Mashad and Isfahan. In 1631 he died on his way to Kerbela and was buried in Najaf, a city in present-day Iraq.

It should be remembered that philosophical discourse in the Muslim world has always been looked at with suspicion. The powerful, dogmatic and politically greedy clergy thought of philosophy as poisonous to the religious mind. During the Safawid dynasty, the hostility towards intellectual discourse continued and the Shi'i clergy, like the Sunni clergy, expressed no sympathy with philosophy. The establishment of the School of Isfahan can be attributed less to intellectual tolerance and freedom of expression in the Safawid dynasty than to other factors such as the political position and power of the families of Muslim thinkers like Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra in Shiraz and Isfahan. Mir Damad's father and grandfather were among the influential Shi'i clergy of their time and enjoyed the patronage and support of the Safawid rulers. Mir Damad also was known for his devotion and religiosity. He was highly revered by the *'ulama* and by the seekers of *irfan* (Gnosticism). His style of writing was also complicated and difficult for the clergy to understand, particularly those who were not familiar with theosophy and

Gnosticism. Nor should we forget Shah Abbas's personal interest in intellectual debate and philosophy and his encouragement of learning and his friendship with Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i. All these factors contributed to the establishment and development of the School of Isfahan and rescued its founders from persecution by the clergy.

Mir Damad's philosophy is characterized by a fusion of Suhrawardi's Illuminationism and Ibn Sina's ontology. For him, there is a clear distinction between Hellenistic philosophy and Islamic thought. Islamic thought is the source of illumination and theosophy, whereas Hellenistic philosophy represents rationalistic discourse. Illuminationism, as explained by Suhrawardi in *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (see Chapter Two), was the continuation of a philosophical tradition from Hermes to Plato and then to Eastern thinkers such as himself.[16] Mir Damad, however, kept Platonism outside Hellenistic thought, because Platonism belonged to the philosophical tradition of the illuminative philosophy. Nasr also mentions that eternal creation, *huduth-i dahri*, is the central idea of Mir Damad's thought.[17] This idea is better understood in light of Mir Damad's division of essence based on Suhrawardi's metaphysics, which eventually leads to different concepts of time. Admittedly, in dealing with the idea of eternal creation, Mir Damad endeavoured to solve the contradictions between the views of Muslim philosophers on creation. He put forward an answer to the question of whether the world was created in time or is eternal. This issue was discussed from the beginning of the rise of Muslim philosophy by thinkers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. Some Muslim philosophers stated that the world was created in time, while others held that it was eternal. The second view was also attacked by al-Ghazali in his *Tahafut al-falasifa*; he branded it heretical. Mir Damad took another metaphysical position by synthesizing these two antagonistic claims and advocating the idea that the world was eternally created. For him, the essence of God is absolutely simple and transcends all distinctions, limitations and qualities. It is the source of divine attributes, which are one with it and at the same time different. The divine essence and divine attributes enjoy a necessary and unchangeable relationship, which is eternal or *sarmadi*, having neither beginning nor end.[18]

The divine attributes are similar to the universal Forms in the ideal world in Plato's metaphysics. Even they have a similar relationship to the particular objects of the material world: they are unchangeable but are capable of generating change. The relationship between this unchangeable sphere of the divine attributes and the changing world leads to the rise of another form of time called *dahr*. The third form of time, called *zaman* by Mir Damad, is the measure of the quantitative change in the material world.[19] What is the significance of this division of time? How does Mir Damad solve the contradiction between the views of those who advocate the paradigm of creation in time and those who believe in the eternity of the world?

Mir Damad's solution to the relationship between *dahr* and *zaman* is that the two forms of time belong to two different spheres of existence. The former time is for the unchangeable and necessary relationship between the divine attributes and the material world. For this Muslim thinker, as for Plato, the material world is distinct from the divine attributes (or the universal Forms in the ideal world). The material world also relies on the divine attributes for its existence. The creation of the world is, therefore, preconditioned by the divine attributes, but it did not occur in the form of time called *zaman* (time as a quantitative change), because *zaman* cannot exist without the material world or before the creation of material objects. The world, which exists in *zaman* and depends on the divine attributes, is also outside the sphere of *dahr*. Conversely, the divine attributes are in *dahr* but not in *zaman*. Something that exists in *zaman* is non-existent in *dahr*, and vice versa. Above them, *sarmad* or the temporality of the divine essence transcends both forms of time. The divine essence is neither in *dahr* nor in *zaman* but is aloof from them and their influence.[20] Divine essence is the source of everything and everything as essence is identified with light. Following Suhrawardi's doctrine of the primacy of essence, and thinking of everything in the world as the originated light, Mir Damad believes that the essence is the only reality and existence is an accident. Accepting the emanationist doctrine of Neoplatonism, he believed that the world came into existence in the process of emanation. This process is characterized by a descending and ascending order. From the divine essence emanated the divine attributes or the archetypal lights, and the universal intellect was the first component of this emanation. From this emanated the heavenly soul, of which the universal soul is a member. From the universal soul emanated the natural souls. In the final stage, matter emanated. This process is described as a descending order from the most to the least perfect form of existence. At the lowest stage of emanation the process takes an ascending order from minerals to animals and the human species.[21] Sufism also inspired Mir Damad. In *Jadhawat*, he describes the ascending journey undertaken by the seekers of redemption to employ intuitivemystic knowledge (*'irfan*) for understanding the Truth and to devote time to serious spiritual contemplation.

Another Muslim thinker who played a role in Mulla Sadra's intellectual life in Isfahan, and who was a member of the School of Isfahan, was Mir Abdul Qasim Findiriski (d. 1641). Mir Findiriski taught philosophy, mathematics and medicine. Many of his students, for example Rafi'a Gailani, Aqa Husayn Kundsari, Mulla Muhammad Baqir Sabzwari and Mulla Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi, became well-known scholars. However, according to Nasr, it is debatable whether Mulla Sadra studied under him. Mulla Sadra, however, was introduced to Mir Findiriski and the two knew one another well. Mir Findiriski lived longer and died in the same year as Mulla Sadra or one year later.[22] Mir Findiriski was acquainted with non-Islamic religious and philo-

sophical traditions in India and Persia. He travelled to India and studied Hinduism as well as Zoroastrianism. He wrote *Usul al-fusul* on Indian philosophy and a commentary for the Persian translation of the *Yoga Vasistha* by Nizam al-Din Paniputi. He was also interested in the fine arts and wrote *Sana'iyyah*, a treatise on the arts and sciences in society.[23] He wrote poetry and lived simply, mixing with the common people and identifying with them. Nasr narrates a story from *Riyad al-aarifin* that Mir Findiriski's attitude towards the common people annoyed Shah Abbas. One day Shah Abbas said, 'I hear some of the leading scholars and sages have been attending cock-fights in the bazaar.' Mir Findiriski, realizing that the remark was meant for him, replied, 'Your majesty, rest assured, I was present but I saw none of the *'ulama* there.'[24]

Another important figure of the first generation of scholars of the School of Isfahan was Shaykh Baha al-Din 'Amili, known also as Shaykh Baha'i. His father Shaykh Husayn, the son of Shaykh Abdul Samad 'Amili, was originally an Arab from Lebanon, and was sent at the age of thirteen to Persia. He became one of the leading theologians and jurists of his time, a Sufi, a poet, and the leader of the *'ulama* in Isfahan.[25] He was also a close friend of Mir Findiriski and Mir Damad. The friendship between these three thinkers is revealed in a fresco in the ruins of a Safawid royal building in Isfahan.

> This fresco depicts a famous story, according to which one day Mir Damad and two of his prominent contemporaries, Shaykh Baha'i and Mir Findiriski, were sitting in a royal hall, engaged in a philosophical discussion. Suddenly a lion that had escaped from the royal zoo enters the hall. The fresco depicts Shaykh Baha'i as collecting himself with signs of fear on his face, Mir Damad as prostrating in gratitude, and Mir Findiriski as utterly indifferent to the lion's presence. The three distinguished friends were later obliged to provide an explanation of their immediate reactions. Shaykh Baha'i is reported to have said that by the power of reason he knew that unless the lion was hungry, it would not attack him, and yet instinctively he was moved to protect himself. Mir Damad explained that, being the descendant of the Prophet, he knew that the lion would not attack him, so he prostrated himself and thanked God for being a descendant of the Prophet. And Mir Findiriski is reported to have said that he mastered the terrifying beast by the power of his inner serenity and self-control.[26]

This story, besides disclosing the friendship between these three thinkers, is indicative of the three forms of discourse, namely rational thinking, doctrinal faith and mystical tendency, combined in the intellectual tradition of the Safawid period. The writings of Shaykh Baha'i on theology and astronomy, and his commentaries on the Qur'an and on Arabic grammar were widely used in Persia. He wrote poems under the influence of Rumi (1207–1273), a Persian Sufi and poet and the founder of the Mawlawiyyah Sufi order.[27] Like his two friends, Shaykh Baha'i was Gnostic and believed that intuitive knowledge was superior to discursive or rationalistic knowledge. Needless to

say, these three thinkers played a remarkable role in the flourishing of the School of Isfahan. The theosophical activities of the school attracted many students from other cities in Persia; Mulla Sadra belonged to its second generation of students.

Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Yahya Shirazi Qawami), also known as *Sadr al-Muta'allihin* and *Akhund*, was born in Shiraz. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown he was probably born in 1572 because it is recorded that he died in 1640 at the age of seventy on his seventh pilgrimage to Mecca. He was buried in Basra, a city in southern Iraq. His father, Mirza Ibrahim b. Yhya Qawami, was a religious scholar and a Shiraz noble. He was also said to have held a ministerial post in the government of Fars province. Shiraz was the capital city of Fars, and, like Isfahan, was well known for its cultural and educational tradition. Mulla Sadra, being the only child of a wealthy, educated and politically powerful family, received the best education possible under the tutelage of his father. Later, after the death of his father in 1587, the adolescent decided to go to Isfahan to pursue his religious studies.[28] The intellectual life in Isfahan, in particular under the influence of Shaykh Baha'i and Mir Damad, enabled Mulla Sadra to develop a keen interest in philosophy and Gnosticism (*'irfan*). He studied the transmitted sciences (*'ulum al-naqliyyah*) with Shaykh Baha'i and philosophy with Mir Damad.

According to Mulla Sadra's confession in *al-Masha'ir*, he was a follower of Suhrawardi's metaphysics and advocated the doctrine of the principality of essence.[29] His subsequent dissatisfaction with this philosophy, however, suggests that the foundation of his conviction was not firm. His philosophical interest changed from the primacy of essence to the primacy of being. He became more concerned with Ibn Sina's ontology, and later in his book *Tarh al-kawnayn* he engages himself with Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being.[30] But the change in Mulla Sadra's thinking was received with hostility by the *'ulama* in Isfahan. Some interpreted Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being as the identification of God with nature, or belief in an immanent God, contrary to the concept of the transcendent God accepted by the majority of Muslims. Also, the philosopher Ibn 'Arabi belonged to the Sunni theological tradition and was venerated by some Sunni Sufi orders, for example the Naqshabandiyyah, who were hostile towards Shi'ism. This may be seen as one of the reasons contributing to the marginalization of Ibn 'Arabi's theosophy by the Shi'i *'ulama* and to the condemnation of his metaphysical views as heretical.

For Ibn 'Arabi, the 'Unity of Being' means that there is only one Being, and existence is nothing but the manifestation or outward radiance of that One Being.[31] In this regard, being rather than quiddity becomes the ruling principle of and reason for the existence of everything. Being is also one and manifests itself at all ranks of existence. Apparently, this multiplicity is not

the negation of unity but gradations of the manifestation of the unity. William Chittick, in *Ibn 'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, tries to explicate the meaning of this doctrine, first by relating the 'Unity of Being' to 'the profession of God's Unity' (*al-tawhid*) in Islam, and second by making a distinction between this Sufi doctrine and pantheism in occidental philosophy. It is noteworthy that the concept of the unity of God (*al-tawhid*) is distinct in connotation from the concept of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). The latter identifies God with Being or renders God and Being as synonymous. The Qur'anic concept of the Unity of God does not mean that nothing other than God exists. It is a simple denial of the polytheism that was a common belief among some Arab tribes of the pre-Islamic period: 'Your God is One God. There is no god but He, the Compassionate, the Merciful';[32] 'Allah bear witness that there is no god but He, and so do the angels and men of learning. He upholds justice. There is no god but He, the Mighty and Wise One.'[33] The statement "There is no God but Allah" (*la ilaha ila Allah*) vividly expresses the existence of one God. It stresses monotheism and rejects other deities beside Allah. The advocates of the Unity of Being altered the first part of this statement 'There is no God . . .' (*la ilah*) to 'There is no being . . .' (*la maujud*). The original Qur'anic verse is the denial of polytheism, and the Sufi version of the unity is an assertion that there is no existence except God, which is an emphasis on the immanence of God rather than His transcendence. Fariduddin al-Attar (1119–1230) illustrated this unity by the analogy of water, saying that: 'Water is water in the boundless ocean; and in the jug too it is the same water.'[34] Again for al-Attar, that which unites the multiple particularization of Reality is being and not quiddity. Likewise all the various gradations of being such as human beings, animals, trees and so on enjoy this unity. In *Fusus al-Hikam*, Ibn 'Arabi also considered God to be the totality of beings: 'God, by virtue of being, is the same as the things that are, because there is no existence other than His Being.'[35]

William Chittick's distinction between the Unity of Being and pantheism in occidental philosophy is not convincing. In my opinion these two doctrines are similar in several ways. Both of them put away duality without insisting on the identification of God with the world. For Spinoza, one of the advocates of pantheism in the West, everything exists through the 'Substance', and beings are particularizations of the manifestation of the attributes of Substance. Meanwhile, Substance is, and at the same time is not, a being: 'God (*Deus*) I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.'[36] He adds: 'Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God.'[37] Spinoza rejects the notion of transcendent God; for him, God's causality is immanent causality, in the sense that God is an indwelling power, but is not identical with his creation or gradations. It is true that Spinoza's concept of God as the only Reality (which is also the view of

the advocates of the doctrine of the Unity of Being) can be mistaken for the identification of God with nature, but nature for Spinoza is one of the infinite attributes of God. Furthermore, Spinoza makes a distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, an indication of a certain self-differentiation in God, implying two distinguishable though inseparable aspects of the same reality.[38]

In the face of the hostility from the official *'ulama*, Mulla Sadra was left with two options: to defend his philosophical position or to retreat from public life. He chose the second and in 1610 left Isfahan for isolation in Kahak, a village near Qum. According to Fazlur Rahman, there was more to this intense opposition and criticism. In fact, the *'ulama* were offended by Mulla Sadra's philosophical ambition. This is shown by the apology offered by the publisher in the introduction to *al-Asfar* stating that the philosopher's ideas in the work represent nothing to do with religious essence.[39] It is also reported that Mulla Sadra was critical of the official *'ulama* and attacked them for using their political position for worldly and material gains. He called them ignorant of the states and stations of the human soul. His relationship with and attitude towards the institution of the *'ulama* can be described as aggressive and un-compromising.[40] He removed himself from public life for a decade, and focused on strengthening the foundation of his philosophical thought and spiritual life. This period of solitude and retreat from public life was the most fruitful time in the intellectual development of Mulla Sadra: 'He was, therefore, in search of a method that would give him certainty and would transform rational propositions into experienced truth.'[41] His intellectual situation, as Fazlur Rahman describes it, was similar to that of al-Ghazali and also of Descartes (1596–1650) when the latter was writing the *Meditations*. The difference was in al-Ghazali's fierce opposition to philosophy and Descartes's reliance on rationalistic discourse. Mulla Sadra neither tried to base truth on dogmatic theology nor accepted the validity of rational principles beyond doubt and limitation. Not much is known about Mulla Sadra during his stay in Kahak, but it is obvious that, although he was forced to choose solitude, this period in his life was significant for the development of a new philosophical ground and for his breaking away from Suhrawardi's metaphysical tradition.[42] He refers to this in *al-Masha'ir*, where he describes the shift from Suhrawardi's doctrine of the primacy of essence to the doctrine of the primacy of Being as turning away from the 'darkness of illusion' to the daylight:

> In the past, I used to be firm on the defence of the principality of essence, making existence a [mentally dependent] abstract entity, until my God guided me and showed me his proof. It became clear to me that the issue is opposite of what has been conceived and determined. Thank God who took me out of the darkness of illusion through the light of comprehension, who removed from my heart the clouds of these doubts through the rise of the sun of truth, and who held me close

> to the true discourse in this life and the life after. Existences are genuine [determinate] realities and essences are the eternal 'thisnesses' which have never inhaled the perfume of real existence at all. These existences are merely the rays and reflected lights of The True Light and of the Eternal Existence. Exalted Be His Sublimity! However, each of them has essential predicates and contains intelligible concepts called essences.[43]

This confession is the confirmation of Mulla Sadra's turn from the philosophical position of essentialism and his departure from Illuminationism, which affirms the primacy of essence and the nullity of being. It is the total conversion from the metaphysical position of Suhrawardi and his *ishraqi* followers to a position where being becomes primary. In this new philosophical position, essence rather than being is considered predicated or conceptual. This turn is seen by Mulla Sadra as a departure from the 'darkness of illusion' to the 'light of the day', which in my opinion has Platonic overtones. It resembles the journey of a liberated prisoner from the cave towards the light of the sun.

In 1625, at the age of fifty-three and having spent more than a decade in solitude, Mulla Sadra decided to return to his own city, Shiraz, on the request of the governor of Fars, Allahwirdi Khan (d. 1613) to teach in a religious school (*madrasa*) that he had recently established. The philosopher resumed teaching and writing and trained a number of notable disciples, among them 'Abdul Razzaq al-Husayn Lahiji and Muhammad al-Murthada, known also as Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani and Hakim Mulla Muhammad Aqa Jani. Lahiji is also known as Fayyadh. He married Um Kalthum, the eldest daughter of Mulla Sadra who was also a scientist and poetess. Lahiji studied in Mashad and travelled to Qum where he met Mulla Sadra and became his student. He has written on philosophy and theology. His main works include *Shawariq al-ilham*, *Gohar murad*, a commentary on Suhrawardi's *al-Nur* and *Sharhi isharat*. Faydh Kashani was an expert on Islamic jurisprudence, *hadith* (the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad), Gnosticism and ethics. He also studied under the instruction of Mulla Sadra in Qum and travelled to Shiraz with his master and married his daughter (Zubaydah). Fayd Kashani returned to his own town, Kashan, where he established a school to teach philosophy and theology. He wrote Gnostic poems and a number of books in Arabic. Among them are *Mafatih*, *al-Wafi*, *Usul al-ma'arif* and *al-Mahajj al-bayza*. Mulla Muhammad Aqa Jani is known for his commentary on Mir Damad's book *al-Qasabat*.

Mulla Sadra's philosophical development can be divided into three periods: in the first period he studied in Isfahan with Shaykh Baha'i and Mir Damad and came under the influence of Illuminationism. Mulla Sadra describes this period in *al-Asfar* as a time of intensive research and investigation of the ideas of Greek philosophers, of Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, of Muslim philosophers from Spain

(al-Andalus) represented by Ibn Bajja, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Rushd and Ibn 'Arabi's theosophy, and of the wisdom of the Illuminationists.[44] In *al-Masha'ir* this period of his intellectual development is identified with disillusionment with the doctrine of the primacy of essence. It was also at this time that Mulla Sadra faced hostility from the '*ulama* in Isfahan. The second period, in Kahak, is characterized by deep philosophical meditation and solitude. The third period was marked by his return to society and the commitment to write and teach in Shiraz, which he did until his death. Although these three periods are interconnected and equally important for understanding his philosophy, the second and the third represent Mulla Sadra's authentic way of understanding reality on a new philosophical ground and the maturity of his thinking. His metaphysical position designates not only a conversion but also a new beginning or a new episode in Islamic philosophical tradition in which 'Being' is not the needfulness of essence; rather, it is the ground without which nothing is thinkable.

Although no definitive chronological order has been established for Mulla Sadra's writings, a list of thirty-three treatises on religion and philosophy is provided by Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar in his introduction to Mulla Sadra's *al-Asfar*.[45] Nasr listed forty-six works of Mulla Sadra and six treatises whose authorship remains uncertain.[46] Professor S. M. Khamenei provided a list of thirty-nine works.[47] Abu Abdullah al-Zanjani also listed twenty-six philosophical works by Mulla Sadra in his *Life and Main Philosophical Teaching of the Great Iranian Philosopher Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi*.[48] Since Mulla Sadra's ontology is our primary interest, the present book deals with the writing of the third period of the philosopher's life. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that even his religious treatises, such as his commentaries on the Qur'anic verses, are related to his philosophical conviction. His major philosophical work and the fountainhead of his thought is *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliyah fi al-asfar al-'aqliyyah al-arba'a*, known also as *al-Asfar* (it is referred to in this book as *al-Asfar*).[49] This work was first published in four volumes in 1865, with a commentary by Mulla Hadi Sabzawari on three volumes. The most recent edition, by Rida Lutfi, was published in nine volumes in 1958. It was also published in Teheran with a Persian commentary by Ayatullah Abdulla Jawadi Amili in 1989. One of Mulla Sadra's early works before *al-Asfar* was *Tarh al-kawnayn*, which was written under the influence of Ibn 'Arabi's pantheistic philosophy and marked the beginning of Mulla Sadra's move away from Suhrawardi's philosophical tradition; this work was also branded as heretical by the institution of *'ulama* in Isfahan. The book was later published under the title *Risalat seryan al-wujud*. Other important philosophical works include *al-Masha'ir*, which is a summary of Mulla Sadra's philosophical project in *al-Asfar* and was published in 1897. It was later published in Persian in 1964 by Dr Karim Mujtahidi, a professor at Teheran University, and was translated into English

by Parviz Morewedge and published by the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science (SSIP) in 1992. Other philosophical works, for example *Al-Hikma al-'arshiyyah*, *al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah fi asrar al-'ulum al-kemaliyyah*, *Risala fi al-haraka al jawheriyyah* and *al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad*, deal with various philosophical and theological issues. Mulla Sadra also wrote a treatise on subject–object dichotomy, *Risala fi itihad al-'aqil w al-ma'qul*, and *Hashiyyah 'ala sharih hikmat al-ishraq lil Suhrawardi*. The latter was published in 1898. A treatise on Ibn Sina's philosophy, *Sharih ilahiyyah al-shifa*, was published in 1885. Mulla Sadra also wrote *Mafatih al-ghayb*, on metaphysics, cosmology and eschatology. *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad* was revised and published by Jalal al-Din Ashtiani in Mashad in 1921. This book was also published in Tunisia in 1972 by Nur al-Din al-Ali, and by the Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Teheran in 1975. The book has two main sections: the knowledge of God and Resurrection. In the last part of the section on Resurrection under the title 'Prophecy', Mulla Sadra deals with the relationship between religion and politics. *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah* is a summary of his teachings and was published for the first time in 1869. It is considered to be his last work.[50] The book was recently edited by Jalal al-Din Ashtyani and was published with Mulla Hadi Sabzawari's commentary in 1967. A collection of his treatises was published in 1996 under the title *Majmu'a rasa'ile-falsafi Sadr al-muta'ahilin*, with an introduction in Persian by Hamid Naji Isfahani. This collection includes important philosophical treatises by Mulla Sadra such as *Risalat itihad 'aqil e ma'qul*, *Risalat isalat ja'il al-wujud* and *Risalat shawahid al-rububiyyah*.

Mulla Sadra's major philosophical work, *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliyah fi al-asfar al-'aqliyyah al-arba'a*, or *al-Asfar* (*The Transcendent Philosophy Concerning the Four Intellectual Journeys of the Soul*), stands as the most valuable philosophical product. It is a work that has remained unknown to a great extent in the West. This work not only contains Mulla Sadra's philosophical system but presents his rich understanding and evaluation of the earlier Muslim philosophical, theological and Sufi traditions. The title of this work indicates four intellectual journeys, which lead human existence from the lowest to the highest rank. These journeys complete one another and describe Mulla Sadra's philosophical system. The four intellectual journeys are:

- A journey from creation to the Truth or Creator
- A journey from the Truth to the Truth
- A journey that stands in relation to the first journey because it is from the Truth to creation with the Truth
- A journey that stands in relation to the second journey because it is from the Truth to the creation.

The first journey, from creation to the Creator, deals with general principles of philosophy or rather metaphysical questions in order to found the transcendent philosophy as a divine science. This journey also addresses philosophical issues such as the definition and meaning of philosophy, the primacy of Being over essence, the gradation of Being, the trans-substantial change (*al-Haraka al-jawhariyyah*), Platonic ideal forms, time, and the dichotomy of the subject–object relationship. The second journey represents Mulla Sadra's natural philosophy and his criticism of Aristotle's doctrine of the categories. It explains the existence of natural entities, matter and forms, substance and accident and the hierarchy of the natural beings in the world. It includes Mulla Sadra's views on the problem of the creation *ex nihilo* and the eternity of the world. It explores the views of the Greek philosophers such as Thales, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle. At the end of this journey Mulla Sadra discusses the relationship between nature and its metaphysical principles. He advocates his own opinion of change as the continuous renewal of the world. In the third journey, Mulla Sadra constructs his own theological ideas or a divine science in a particular sense. It includes the nature of God's existence, divine unity and attributes, God's knowledge of the world, good and evil and the divine law. He also gives different proofs for the existence of God, God's knowledge of the world, the nature of divine will, and the role of love (*ishq*) in the evolutionary process of change. The fourth journey is the end of the intellectual progress of Mulla Sadra where he explains his own understanding of rational psychology and eschatology. It begins with a discussion on different types of the soul, the proofs for its existence, and the possibility of the separation of the soul from the corporeal world. Mulla Sadra also deals critically with the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. He explains the condition of the human souls who reside in heaven and hell quoting from Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futuhat al-makiyyah* at the end.

These four intellectual journeys in *al-Asfar* are not only descriptive of Mulla Sadra's philosophical ideas, but also critical of almost all views held by his predecessors. Fazlur Rahman describes this style of Mulla Sadra as hypercritical because all alternative solutions to the philosophical problems are rejected; meanwhile the new solutions he suggests seem not to be essentially different or in disagreement with those of his predecessors. For example, in his discussion on eschatology he rejects al-Ghazali's solution but his own solution on physical resurrection is not distinguishable from that offered by al-Ghazali. The only texts and thinkers that did not come under Mulla Sadra's critical scrutiny were the foundation texts of Islam, the views of the Shi'i imams, and Ibn 'Arabi.[51]

The third period of Mulla Sadra's intellectual development gave rise to a new type of ontology based on the doctrine of the primacy of Being. This ontology, although it had similarities with Ibn Sina's ontology and Ibn

'Arabi's theosophy, offered a new philosophical foundation distinct from that of Illuminationism. Although not recognized immediately by the intellectual circle of its time, Mulla Sadra's philosophical achievement gradually inscribed its effect in the Muslim philosophical tradition, particularly during the Qajar dynasty. Today it is almost impossible to understand the development of Muslim philosophy without understanding Mulla Sadra's ontological enterprise and his influence in the Persian-speaking world.

The influence of Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy and the doctrine of the primacy of Being was felt later in the post Isfahan era. This era is characterized by the political changes to Shi'ite Islamic power after the collapse of the Safawid dynasty in 1732 and the shift of the centre for Islamic philosophical studies from Isfahan, capital of the Safawids, to Teheran following the establishment of the Qajar in 1779 by Agha Muhammad Khan.[52] The Safawid dynasty witnessed the culmination of the Shi'ite political and philosophical fusion, but it remained a target of sectarian antagonism by the Sunni neighbouring political hegemony and tribes. It is reported that Mir Vais, a Suuni Muslim leader of the Ghilzai tribe in Qandahar, travelled through Isfahan on his way to Mecca in 1707. He collected some material containing matters repugnant to Sunni Islam. After showing them to the Sunni '*ulama* in Makkah he obtained a *fatwa* (religious verdict) from them authorizing *jihad* (holy war) against the Shi'ites and their dynasty in Isfahan. The holy war began with an attack on the Shi'ite minority in Qandahar and ended with the fall of Isfahan in 1722. In 1723 another *fatwa* was issued against the Shi'ites by the Shaykh al-Islam (of the chief '*ulama*) in Istanbul,[53] in which it was stated that the blood of male Shi'ites was to be shed and even their women and children to be taken captive.[54] In 1743, in this hostile atmosphere, Nadir Shah tried to promote a revised form of Shi'ite Islam. He sponsored a meeting between Shi'ite and Sunnite '*ulama* in Najaf and later succeeded in having the Shi'ites recognized as the followers of the Ja'afari School of law (*mazhab*), the fifth Islamic school of law, by the Ottoman empire. Unfortunately Nadir Shah was assassinated soon after this achievement.[55]

The Qajar dynasty, unlike the Safawid, was characterized by constant internal tension between the political hegemony of the monarch and the institution of the '*ulama*. The Qajar monarchs did not claim religious authority for themselves through alleged imamate descent. They, however, sought the favour of some '*ulama* by patronizing the Shi'ite holy shrines of the imams and offering other services.[56] The Qajar monarchs' alienation of the official '*ulama* from the political hegemony and the tenuous relationship between the state and religious authority made the '*ulama* stronger as an opposition so that their religious actions were intensified politically in the community. Various religious schools were established for promoting religious studies. Sufi orders such as Shaykhis, Ni'mat Allahi, Zahabis and Khaksar gained popularity.[57] The Shaykhi order eventually became the birthplace of the Babi

movement with its doctrine of the messianic return of the hidden imam, which later developed into Baha'ism.[58] The '*ulama* stressed the external dimension and rituals of the faith in light of the instructions of the imams, while the Sufi movement justified the significance of the internal dimension of the faith, but again for its effectiveness turned to the teachings of the imams.

Parallel to this development in the Qajar period, the teaching of Mulla Sadra's philosophy added another element of diversity to the cultural progress of Shi'i Islam. The school of Isfahan, where Mulla Sadra studied under the direction of Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i, was dominated by the 'Essentialism' of the *ishraqi* metaphysical tradition of Suhrawardi. By contrast, the philosophical school of Teheran flourished under the sway of Muslim 'Existentialism' or the metaphysical tradition of Mulla Sadra. This metaphysical tradition became 'central to the intellectual life of Qajar Persia and was of great importance not only for those who considered themselves as his followers, but even by those who opposed him, as is seen in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i, the founder of the Shaykhi movement and Sayyid Muhammad the Bab, the founder of Babism.'[59] Although the school of Teheran was founded at the end of the eighteenth century with the advent of the Qajar dynasty, the teaching of Mulla Sadra's philosophy actually began with Mulla Ali Nuri (d. 1830–1831) in Isfahan, the former Safawid capital of Persia in the early Qajar period. Mulla Ali Nuri was a great Islamic scholar and his teaching of Mulla Sadra's philosophy in that city continued without opposition from the official '*ulama*.[60] Ali Nuri also wrote commentaries on *al-Asfar*, *al-Masha'ir* and *Sharh usul al-kafi*. His pupils included Mulla Muhammad Isma'il Isfahani, Mulla Abdullah Zunuzi, and his son Mulla Ali Mudarris Zunuzi, Mulla Muhammad Ja'afar Langarudi, Mulla Isma'il Khajaw'i, and finally Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, who studied philosophy for seven years in Isfahan and was responsible for the revival of the Existentialist school of Mulla Sadra in the Qajar period.[61] The philosophical school of Teheran, however, became the centre for studying Mulla Sadra's philosophy on one hand and Islamic esotericism or Gnosticism on the other. The latter was advocated by Sayyid Radi Larijani, known also as *Malik a-Batini* (the Professor of the Esoteric).[62]

Mulla Sadra's philosophy was also taught on the Indian subcontinent for the first time by Muhammad Salih Kashani, a disciple of Mulla Sadra who migrated to India. Indian Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Amjad al-Sadiqi (d. 1727), Mulla Hasan Laknawi (d. 1783), Muhammad A'lam Sindili (d. 1834) and Abdul Ali Bahr al-'Ulum (died in the nineteenth century) wrote commentaries on the works of Mulla Sadra.[63] As mentioned earlier, one of the most influential figures in the promotion of the philosophy of Mulla Sadra during the Qajar dynasty was Mulla Hadi Sabzawari. This Muslim thinker was born in 1797 in Sabzawar in north-eastern Iran. He studied metaphysics,

logic, mathematics and jurisprudence in Mashhad. He then moved to Isfahan to study philosophy with Mulla Isma'il Isfahani and Mulla Ali Nuri, the interpreter of Mulla Sadra's philosophy of that time. Although he studied with Mulla Ali Nuri for about three years, Sabzawari hints in his autobiography at "illuminati" rather than Mulla Sadra's philosophy as the motive behind his inclination for philosophy and traveling to Isfahan:

> I spent a total of ten years in the pious circle of the late Mulla [Mulla Husayn Sabzawari in Mashhad], until the time that my passion for learning was intensified. From Isfahan the whisper of the 'illuminati' reached my heart, at a time when, by the grace of God, I found great pleasure as well as competence in theological studies. I then left Khurasan for Isfahan leaving behind a considerable amount of property and goods. I stayed there for eight years gaining, with God's aid, an ascetic temperament, free of excessive passions, as well as success in my studies of the sciences and the *shari'a*; however, I spent most of my time studying philosophy of the illuminationsit school. For five years I studied with that supreme doctor of theology (glory of truth seekers, shining light of savants and teachers, possessing the virtuousness of the divines – nay the virtues of God, that knower of the Truth), Akhund Mulla Isma'il Isfahani (may al-Sharif (God) sanctify his heart).[64]

After the death of Mulla Isma'il Isfahani, Sabzawari studied with Mulla Ali Nuri: 'When I returned to Khurasan, I continued my studies of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tafsir* (commentary) for five years, for scholars (there) favoured these two subjects and offered deep understanding of *hikmat* (philosophy). For this reason I rely mostly on *hikmat*, especially *ishraqi* (Illuminationism).'[65] After returning from pilgrimage to Mecca, Sabzawari spent the rest of his life in his own town teaching philosophy and theology. He soon earned a reputation as a great thinker of the Qajar dynasty; even Nasir al-Din Shah (the Qajar king who died in 1896) visited him in 1867. Sabzawari died in 1873 and was recognized as the founder of the Sabzawar philosophical school. He was called, as Henri Corbin states, 'the Plato of his time', and was also said to be its Aristotle.[66] One of the most famous philosophical works of Sabzawari is *Ghurar al-Fara'id*, in which he gives a systematic account of Mulla Sadra's existential philosophy together with *Sharh al-manzumah* in poetic verses. Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the primacy of Being, modalities and the systematic ambiguity of Being are discussed in the first part of this work. Sabzawari wrote three other commentaries on *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah*, *al-Mabda' wa al-mi'ad* and *Mafatih al-ghayb*. Another work, *Asrar al-hikma*, deals in detail with the origin of being, eschatology and the esoteric meaning of liturgical practices. At the request of Nasir al-Din Shah (the Qajar monarch) Sabzawari produced a summary of this work entitled *Hidayat al-talibin*.[67]

In modern times, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatab'i (professor at the theological University of Qum) is considered to be one of the philosophers and Gnostic thinkers of Persia who were inspired by Mulla Sadra's

philosophy. He was born in Tabriz in 1903 and died in 1981. He wrote numerous books, one being a new edition of Mulla Sadra's *al-Asfar*. Tabatab'i was also engaged in a philosophical debate with Henri Corbin from 1958 to 1977. These debates were arranged by Sayyid Hossein Nasr (1933–) and conducted before a small audience. Among those who attended were Ayatollah Mutahari and Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani.[68] Many other Persian Muslim thinkers have followed Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Among them are Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Rafi'i Qazwini, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani (1925–), a professor of theology at Mashhad who edited Mulla Sadra's *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah*, *al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah* and Sabzawari's *Majmu'ai i-rasa'il*, and Sayyid Muhammad Kazim 'Assar (1885–1975), professor of theology at the University of Teheran, Mahdi Illahi Qumsha'i, professor of philosophy at the University of Teheran, and 'Allamah Muhammad Salih Ha'iri Simnani.[69] At present, Sayyid Muhammad Khamenei, the director of Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute in Teheran, and Gholam Hossein Ebrahimi Dinani, a professor of philosophy at the University of Teheran, are working on Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Mulla Sadra's philosophy is also studied widely at the universities and religious schools (*madrasa*) in Iran.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Doctrine of the Primacy of Being: An Ontological Turn

As a dedicated and critical thinker, Mulla Sadra investigated deeply into almost the entire corpus of philosophical, theological and mystical Islamic thought. Under the influence of his teacher, Mir Damad, he became one of the followers of Illuminationism.[1] Like his teacher, he was also interested in Ibn Sina's ontology and studied Ibn 'Arabi's theosophy. Suhrawardi, Ibn Sina and Ibn 'Arabi had a notable impact on Mulla Sadra's thinking and played a significant role in facilitating his ontological turn from the doctrine of the primacy of essence to the primacy of being and in his development of a new ontological system. Mulla Sadra's ideas were formed in the matrix of the dominant philosophy of Suhrawardi in the school of Isfahan. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, Suhrawardi held the metaphysical view that being was a mere mental concept and that essence was the only reality. Human knowledge of an object was also possible only through the revealing of its essence. A relationship was suggested between Suhrawardi's Illuminationism and Plato's metaphysics; this relationship was seen as important in comparing Mulla Sadra's ontology with that of Heidegger.

From the second period of his intellectual development, Mulla Sadra began to express dissatisfaction with the metaphysics of Illuminationism, in particular with the doctrine of the primacy of essence and declared, on the contrary, the doctrine of the primacy of Being. This ontological turn could not have occurred without the influence of Ibn Sina and Ibn 'Arabi. Mulla Sadra's teacher, Mir Damad, also tried to combine Suhrawardi's *ishraqi* thought with the Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophy of Ibn Sina. The philosophical tradition of the Isfahan school could not be characterized by blind imitation of Suhrawardi's Illuminationism. There was an inclination towards newly creative ideas and an attempt to amalgamate Suhrawardi's thought with that of Ibn Sina. Mulla Sadra, however, crossed the boundary set by the official interpretation of Islamic thought when he expressed his interest in Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). In addition to the influence of this doctrine, another visible influence on Mulla Sadra was the psychological–eschatological role of the realm of images. In this realm, according to Ibn 'Arabi, images are as real as they are perceptible. The images in the human soul in the hereafter, since they are not attached to material objects, are more vivid and real than the images in the material world. This idea was used by Mulla Sadra to prove his view on bodily resurrection in his eschatological doctrine.[2]

For Ibn Sina, existence and essence were both real. Existence was of two kinds: necessary and contingent. He illustrated the difference between them in two ways. First, the necessary being is dependent on itself to exist and its existence is inseparable from its essence, or rather it is pure existence. By contrast, contingent beings are not self-dependent and derive from necessary beings. Their essences are also separable or are additional to them.[3] Following Ibn Sina's ontological division and his distinction between existence and essence, the problem of whether existence or essence constitutes reality emerged in subsequent philosophical debates among Muslim thinkers. Suhrawardi, as one of the followers of Platonism, argued against Ibn Sina's ontology and insisted on the non-reality of existence and advocated the idea that essence was the only reality.[4] Mulla Sadra contradicted Suhrawardi's doctrine and rejected the Platonic–Illuminationsit metaphysical view that nothing in the real world corresponds to existence or nothing exists but ideas or essence. He, on the contrary, believed that nothing is real but existence.

In seeking to clarify the similarities between Mulla Sadra and Heidegger in relation to the doctrine of Being, it is important to note three points:

- Mulla Sadra and Heidegger stress the principality of Being and the reality of Being as a pre-ontological condition for the existence of all beings.
- Both thinkers argue against Plato's metaphysics, which reduces everything to ideas or their essences.
- They hold the view that Aristotle's logic and rationalist cognition are incapable of revealing the meaning of Being. As a result, a new cognitive instrument is required to apprehend the meaning of Being.

Mulla Sadra conceived of no more difficult task than marking a departure from the dominant philosophical tradition of his time and developing a new ontological system capable of rendering being meaningful. The task could be accomplished, however, by being essentially critical as well as creative through challenging Illuminationism. A new philosophical beginning was required, which should begin with a shift to the doctrine of the primacy of Being. In Chapter Three the shift in the direction of his thought from the second period of his intellectual development was described as a 'turn' from the core elements of Suhrawardi's metaphysics which neglected fundamental philosophical questions in favour of investigating the nature of something less fundamental or grounded that could not exist by itself. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), similarly sought a new ontological system based on understanding of the meaning of Being as the most fundamental philosophical concern. In order to prove this, Heidegger argues that the post Aristotelian thinkers accepted the dogma of negligence or the abandonment of Being. They withdrew themselves from the genuine philosophical question about the meaning of Being, for three reasons. First, they thought that Being was the

most universal concept, and that its universality 'transcended' any universality of genus. Second, since Being is the most universal concept, and is not an entity, it is therefore indefinable and escapes all attempts to define it in accordance with the rules of 'definition' provided in Aristotelian logic. Third, Being is self-evident.[5] Heidegger rejects these three presuppositions and argues against the post Aristotelian thinkers that the universality of the concept of Being does not guarantee the clarity of its meaning, and that the meaning of this concept is still the darkest of all. He also, like Mulla Sadra, says that Being is not an entity and is thus indefinable, and that Aristotle's definition by genus and difference, '*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*' or connotative definition, which is the most important kind of definition, is not applicable to it but appropriate only for defining beings. Heidegger also believes that the indefinableness of Being does not invalidate the question of its meaning, and should not hinder us from investigating that meaning:

> Being cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones. But does this imply that 'Being' no longer offers a problem? Not at all. We can infer only that 'Being' cannot have the character of an entity. Thus we cannot apply to Being the concept of 'definition' as presented in traditional logic, which itself has its foundations in ancient ontology and which, within certain limits, provides a quite justifiable way of defining 'beings'. The indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face.[6]

To clarify Mulla Sadra's view on the indefinableness of Being, Mulla Hadi Sabzawari states that even the positive attributes by which we try to define Being will neither render a definition nor a description, because whatever attribute is employed is not applicable to this reality. Sabzawari's argument is based on the notion of the 'simplicity' of Being. Since Being is simple, it has no differentia or genus on which its definition will become possible. Attaching positive attributes to Being cannot be a description because Being has no accidental properties to ascribe to it.[7] As a result, Sabzawari suggests that the meaning of Being will be understood through negative attributes. Being, for example, is neither a substance nor an accident. Substance is essence and since it has no substratum cannot be an accident. Another way of understanding the meaning of Being is that Being has neither an opposite nor anything with similarity, because Being has no genus or *differentia*. It is not distinct or different from anything. That is why there is nothing to be opposed to it. Because Being also has no essence to share with another being, it is not possible to think of anything similar to Being. We can also say that Being is not a part and has no parts.[8] The negative attributes listed here reveal some aspects of the nature of Being; but again, like positive attributes, these are neither definitions nor descriptions of Being.

Mulla Sadra describes the metaphysics of Suhrawardi in his book *al-Masha'ir* (the illusion of darkness, or the concealment of the truth):

> Existences are genuine [determinate] realities and essences are the eternal 'thisnesses' which have never inhaled the perfume of real existence at all. These existences are merely the rays and reflected lights of the True Light and of the Eternal Existence–Exalted Be His Sublimity! However, each of them has essential predicates and contains intelligible concepts called essences.[9]

The 'darkness of illusion' is indicative of Suhrawardi's metaphysics. It is the state of untruth that reigns over the whole of reality in such a way that the meaning of Being remains unattainable and concealed. For Heidegger, the 'darkness of illusion' is the 'abandonment of Being', which led to 'nihilism' in the occidental thought of Plato, whom Suhrawardi considered the master of Illuminationism, and finally of Nietzsche. It represents a history of negligence of the most fundamental philosophical question. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger states:

> Where is nihilism really at work? Where men cling to familiar *essents* and suppose that it suffices to go on talking about *essents* as essents, since after all that is what they are. But with this they reject the question of being and treat being like a nothing (*nihil*) which in a certain sense it is, insofar as it has an essence. To forget being and cultivate only the essent – that is nihilism . . . By contrast, to press inquiry into being explicitly to the limits of nothingness to draw nothingness into the question of being – this is the first and only fruitful step toward a true transcending of nihilism.[10]

In *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)* Heidegger explains this metaphysical position in detail and points out four forms of nihilism: actual nihilism, the greatest nihilism, the most disastrous nihilism, and finally crude nihilism.[11] These forms of nihilism have no historical sequence as any one can emerge in one historical epoch together with the abandonment of Being. Nihilism is also described as the epoch of total lack of questioning in which

> problems will pile up and rush around, those types of 'questions', which are not really questions, because their response dare not have anything binding about them, insofar as it immediately becomes a problem again. This says exactly and in advance that nothing is immune to dissolution and that deconstruction [*Auflösung*] is only a matter of numbers regarding time, space, and force.[12]

The reconstruction of new metaphysical thought based on the principality of Being means destroying the foundation of nihilism; this should be the priority of this project for Mulla Sadra as well as for Heidegger. Ontology needs to become the foundation of philosophical thinking; even philosophy has to be defined as an inquiry into the meaning of Being: 'Initially and throughout the long history between Ahaximander and Nietzsche, inquiring into being is

only a question concerning the being of beings.'[13] Both Mulla Sadra and Heidegger developed, by revolting against the dominant Platonic tradition, a new ontology at two different times and against two different cultural backgrounds. At the end of this revolt, Suhrawardi for Mulla Sadra and Nietzsche for Heidegger represent the final stage in the development of an antagonistic metaphysical tradition. The 'darkness of illusion' or 'abandonment of Being' is not simply an effacement for these two thinkers, but a serious philosophical problem that reigns over the whole domain of thinking in such a way that the truth of Being recedes into the darkness or, as Heidegger states, into the 'disintegration of truth' and finally the thinking of Being as essence.[14] Beginning with Plato, Being was understood as 'Idea' and was interpreted as mere representation in the domain of thinking. As a consequence, in Plato's metaphysics, the Being of beings as a whole was relegated to darkness. In Heidegger's view, the concealment of truth about the reality of Being in the history of occidental thought from the time of Plato is like 'the process in which the light of a star that has been extinguished for millennia will gleam but its gleaming nonetheless remains a mere appearance'.[15] Overcoming this type of metaphysics is possible only by turning to, and not in a mere conversion of, the metaphysics of Being by positing the most fundamental philosophical question concerning the meaning of Being and its principality. It is possible to turn to the metaphysics of Being, as described by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and *Contributions to Philosophy*, by making Being the grounding question and by allowing the re-emergence of the truth of Being as the only inner reality of all ontic beings. For Mulla Sadra, as he writes in *al-Masha'ir*, this is a departure from the 'darkness of illusion' to the daylight of the Truth.

The theme of ontology in Mulla Sadra's philosophy is the sum of the multiplicities of being grounded on the principle of unity. In this kind of system, in which unity and multiplicity are taken into consideration, the relation of unity to multiplicity and of identity to difference is decisive. In this system of ontology, the principal reality, Being, unlike Plato's universal Forms in the ideal world, is not multiple. It is a unity or identity manifesting itself in multiple gradations (difference). In this case this unity in multiplicity or identity in difference is best understood in the light of Hegel's dialectic logic rather than Aristotle's, because it is not abstract identity. It is not a simple unity of Being with itself but a relation to itself. By virtue of this relation of identity, beings or the multiple modalities of Being exist, and Being becomes the unified ground for them. In identity, Being and the modalities of Being belong together. This metaphysical principle is one of the most general and encompassing determinations on which all modalities of Being depend. Precisely, it indicates that Being functions as the foundation on which we can grasp the nature of the relationship between unity and multiplicity. It shows that unity and multiplicity are two different aspects of the same reality. Unity

contains multiplicity and vice versa. But taking Being as a unified ground of grounded multiplicity resembles to a great extent Aristotle's understanding of Being in the *Metaphysics*. For Aristotle, general ontology must study unity and its varieties. He insists that there is a unity beneath the diversity of phenomenal objects and that unity is Being *qua* being. There is also a single science known as 'general ontology', which investigates Being as well as its varieties. But the difference between Aristotle and Mulla Sadra arises with the doctrine of the categories and the rationalistic apprehension of this unified ground or Being *qua* being. Aristotle listed ten categories, of which the most fundamental was substance. The other categories, such as quality, quantity, relation, place, time, posture, state, action and passion, are dependent on substance to exist and cannot be by themselves. Meanwhile, these categories are classes or genera and their applications render our knowledge of the phenomenal world possible.[16] In Mulla Sadra's ontology, Being, as the principle of the unity beneath the multiplicity of the phenomenal objects, is beyond the domain of the applicability of these categories. Hence Being remains indefinable. It is not a genus, *differentia*, species or a common and specific accident. In this case, understanding the meaning of Being cannot be based on anything other than itself:

> It [existence] cannot be described [defined], because description is due to either a definition or a [distinguishing] mark. Thus, it cannot be described by definition. Since it has neither a genus nor *differentia*, it does not have a definition. Nor can it [be described] by a distinguishing mark, since its understanding cannot be supplied by anything more manifest and prevalent than it. It is a mistake to attempt to describe existence, for it would need to be described by something more hidden than the [entity] itself – unless the aim were to [approach it by] either an indication or a notification, or some description; the latter is merely a syntactical [lit. linguistic] inquiry.[17]

Being is then not conditioned by any sort of determination and limitation. If it is defined it is limited and conditioned by its determinations, for every affirmation is a negation. Kant, in the second and third part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, draws a similar conclusion. He limits the application of the categories to the multiple forms of the phenomenal world, and the 'thing-in-itself' or *noumenon* is kept beyond the applicability of the categories of human understanding and hence remains unknowable. These two conclusions look similar as each recommends the employment of the categories for revealing beings rather than their inner reality; but Mulla Sadra and Heidegger disagree with Kant on the unknowablity of reality. For them, the shortcoming in the application of the categories to the realm of Being does not hinder an investigation into the meaning of Being. The unknowability and indefinability of Being, as indicated here, refer to the inherent shortcoming of Aristotle's logic and rationalistic apprehension, which becomes an explicit

problem in the epistemological inquiry of Kant. Nevertheless, this shortcoming does not negate the task of ontological inquiry. Mulla Sadra and Heidegger searched for a new epistemological tool and methodology that was different from the Aristotelian form of cognition. Mulla Sadra, in particular, relied on intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence for investigating the meaning of Being. It is a cognitive tool associated with the mystic way of apprehending the reality:

> As it has been stated, the reality of existence is neither genus, nor species, nor accident, since it is not a natural universal. Instead, its inclusion happens in another mode of inclusion, and no one has gnosis of it except the mystics; i.e. those who are firmly grounded in mystical knowledge. Sometimes it is interpreted as the spiritual soul [i.e., Holy Spirit], other times as the grace 'which extendeth to all things'. Sometimes [it is interpreted as the] 'Reality from which beings have been created', according to the mystics. [Also, it is] the expansion of the light of existence to the structures [lit. figures] of contingent beings, and the essences which are receptive to it; finally, [they speak of] its descent towards the abodes of inner-natures.[18]

For Heidegger, the universality of Being is also not a natural universal like the universality of 'whiteness'. Its universality 'transcends' any universality of genus. Those who follow Aristotle's rule for definition arrive at a negative conclusion in defining Being, simply because Being is not a genus and has no *differentia*. But does this mean that no further attempt should be made to understand the meaning of this indefinable reality? Indeed, if the horizon of thinking is limited by Aristotle's doctrine of the task and application of the categories, the answer to this question is in the affirmative. Mulla Sadra and Heidegger, although inspired by Aristotle's ontology, denounced his logic and his rationalistic apprehension of Being. An inquiry into the meaning of Being is not in the scope of rational epistemology or regional ontology, because Being is distinct from beings. Similar to Aristotle's First Principle, it is a prior condition not only for beings but also for all scientific inquiries, yet it cannot be studied scientifically. 'Fundamental ontology', which takes Being into account, is substantially distinctive and its subject matter is neither this nor that kind of being but Being *per se*: 'Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its own most aim, if it has not adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.'[19] Mulla Sadra also believes that the question of the meaning of Being becomes a prior condition and the foundation of all kinds of scientific discourse and knowledge:

> The question of existence is the foundation of the principles of wisdom, the basis of philosophical theology, and the nexus of [concern] of those in the circle [lit. the millstone; i.e., the centre] of the sciences of unity, the resurrection of souls and

> bodies, and of much else that only we have developed and articulated. It gives them a synthesis [lit. a unity] through its explication. Anyone who is ignorant of the gnosis of existence is also ignorant of the major subjects and most significant quests and misses the refinements of gnosis and its subtleties, the science of the divine and the prophets, the gnosis of the soul, and its connection and return to the [primordial] source and destiny [i.e., *telos*].[20]

As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi acknowledges his debt to Plato and considers him to be one of his spiritual masters and a great Illuminationist sage and thinker. However, Mulla Sadra's attack on Suhrawardi's philosophy is a direct criticism of Platonism.[21] In addition, while Mulla Sadra and Heidegger came from different cultural backgrounds, the similarity in their thought is within the framework of their ontology and criticism of Platonism; that is, represented by Illuminationism of Suhrawardi in Persia and the nihilism of occidental thought. These two philosophical traditions, one Eastern and one Western, belong to Platonism, which has led to the 'abandonment of Being'. They stand in opposition to the type of metaphysics founded and advocated by Mulla Sadra and Heidegger.

The new ontological enterprise of Mulla Sadra is explained in the first journey of *al-Asfar* and is continued in *al-Masha'ir* and *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. Mulla Sadra was convinced that Being is self-evident; in *al-Masha'ir*, in the Third Prehension, under the title 'An Analysis of the [Extra-Mental] Existence Having a Determinate [Concrete, Fully Determined] Status', he tried to prove the principality of Being in eight ways or by eight arguments that he called evidences.

The First Evidence

'The reality of anything is its existence, which ranks with its effects and implications. Existence, therefore, must be the most real of all things for it is the possessor of reality, because whatever possesses reality possesses reality only due to it.'[22] Being in this evidence becomes an *a priori* ontological condition for the existence of all things. Everything finds its way into the light of being or the objective reality only through Being and by relying on Being rather than its essence.

The Second Evidence

In this evidence, Mulla Sadra states that when the principality or the reality of essence is affirmed there will be no distinction between external and mental realities, but that 'this however is absurd'. He also states that if something exists in the external world or intellectually, it does not signify that these two

domains (external and intellectual) stand for that thing as containers in which the existence of that thing is established. It simply means that it has an existence from which some effects and consequences are derived.[23]

The Third Evidence

If the reality of things is in their essences, then it is impossible to predicate essences of one another. Predication is the union of two concepts. This implies that when one thing is predicated of another, the two will be united in existence but be different from one another in their essences:

> If things exist by their essences and not by the [mediation] of something else, it would not be possible to predicate them on each other, such as 'Zaid is an animal' or 'Man walks'. It is so, because the use and the truth of predication is a union between different concepts in existence. Thus the judgment made of something predicated on something else is an expression of their unity in existence, though they be diverse as concepts and in terms of their essences.[24]

If the reality of a thing is its essence, then there will be no distinction between a subject and its predicate on the bases of unity and diversity.

The Fourth Evidence

Here Mulla Sadra supposes that if Being is non-existent then nothing has existed. Since the non-existence of things is false, the non-existence of existence is necessarily false. Also, if we think of essence as not in a union with existence, then it is non-existent in any mode. If there is no existence, then the predication of an essence is impossible, as affirming a predicate presupposes the existence of the subject. The adjunction of a non-existent thing to another non-existing thing has no validity.[25]

The Fifth Evidence

This evidence is another version of the previous evidence. Before, Mulla Sadra states that without Being nothing can exist; here he holds the view that if Being has no concrete form or external actualization, then no species will have particulars or individuals: 'If existence is not realized in the individuals of a species, no one of the [individuals of the species] is realized in the external realm.'[26] For the actualization of an individual a species is required, which also relies on existence to be, and nothing (for example, another universal concept) other than existence can qualify as a necessary condition for this purpose.

The Sixth Evidence

Again, in proving the principality of Being, Mulla Sadra argues that there are two kinds of accidents: accidents of existence such as 'whiteness' for a body, and accidents of essence such as *differentia* for a genus. Some thinkers believe that the qualification of essences by existence, and the presentation of existence to the essences, is not a case of an external type of qualification or an occurrence of an accident to its subject, because this implies that the object of qualification enjoys a certain degree of reality. The occurrence of accidents of essences (*differentia* to genus) does not contradict their unity in the real world. This can be held true for the relationship between existence and essence. Existence as an accident of essence must be united with it, and this implies that existence as an objective reality should be realized: 'Existence, therefore, must be something by the mediation of which an essence exists and with which it is united in [the externally determined realm of] existence.'[27]

The Seventh Evidence

In this evidence, the reality of existence is explained through the relationship of an accident with its subject. It is believed that the existence of an accident is nothing in itself but is something for its subject; that is, the existence of an accident is 'identical with its incarnation [i.e., instantiation] in its subject'.[28] This incarnation of an accident in its subject takes place in the real world. It is also clear that the subject of an accident is not included in its essence or its definition but in its existence. The category of accident depends on something other than itself, namely a subject, to be manifest. Keeping this in mind, we can conclude that if existence (the subject) is not real, then the accident is a mental concept. The existence of blackness, for example, would be a concept rather than an incarnation in a body, which is an actual base for the meaning of blackness. This also leads to the denial of the separation of existence from essence in the realm of accident, whereas the reality of this separation has already been agreed upon.[29]

The Eighth Evidence

Again, if existence is a mental concept and not real, as stated by Suhrawardi and other *ishraqi* thinkers, then 'an infinite number of species could be realized between any two limits'. There would be no specific number of specific essences, and no specific number of species would be realized between any two limits of intensity, which is necessarily false. According to Mulla Sadra, the doctrine of the primacy of Being offers a solution to this

problem, because it advocates the idea that the structure of all essences stands on the foundation of a single unity (i.e., Being) and one incessant form. In this incessant form, the unity of being is actual and its multiplicities will be in the potential mode without opposing or negating one another.[30]

It is worth mentioning that these evidences do not explain the meaning of Being but only its principality. Being, which reflects the reality of all things, cannot be known rationally or conceptually. It can only be experienced intuitively. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari also restated these evidences of Mulla Sadra for the primacy of Being, but reduced them to six. According to Dinani, there is a slight difference between Sabzawari and Mulla Sadra in the evidences. In reality, the material used by the former is same as that developed by the latter.[31] Sabzawari also presented six arguments to prove the validity of Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the primacy of Being; some of them are not significantly different from those of Mulla Sadra's evidences. In the first argument, Sabzawari insists that the self-evidence of Being becomes the fountainhead of all values in human life because values are not attributed to concepts, which are mentally posited. The second argument is the realization of the distinction between external and internal (mental) modifications of Being: 'So if existence is not realized, and if what were realized were quiddity – and quiddity is kept in both modes of being without any difference – there would be no distinction between the external and the mental. But since this consequence is absurd, the antecedent must also be the same.'[32] The third argument deals with the priority of cause to its effect in relation to the reality of Being. The cause, as we know, necessarily precedes the effect logically as well as in time. If we suppose that Being, as stated by the *ishraqi* thinkers, is not real but is mentally posited, then a specific quiddity of fire as a cause would be prior to the specific quiddity of fire as the effect, which becomes posterior. In this manner the generic quiddity of a substance as a cause would be prior to a posterior substance, which is caused by the former. This will necessitate a priority–posteriority relationship in the quiddities. In the doctrine of the primacy of Being, Being is considered to be real, and things, which are prior or posterior, are quiddities; yet only Being can confirm their priority or posteriority.

Arguments four and six of Sabzawari are similar. Each deals with the reality of Being as a unity beneath the scattered quiddities and multiplicities of beings. In the fourth argument, the primacy of Being is established on the gradual increase in the evolutionary movement of the world. This movement, in which various species with quiddities are posited, is both continuous and infinite. If the philosophical position of Illuminationism is true and Being is mental, then the species will be bound by the beginning and the end, because Being is one and many in accordance with the things from which the concept of being is abstracted. In this case, Being will not be present as a single reality and unity and the quiddities will be dispersed without a connection among

them.[33] The sixth argument takes Being as uniting the multiplicity in the phenomenal world of beings. It argues that Being should be fundamentally real in order to be a unitary ground for all beings.[34] In the fifth argument, Sabzawari says that if Being is a mental reality, then 'what could have made the quiddities leave the state of equality, and by what have they come to deserve the predicate "existence"?'[35]

Being is the primordial reality on which everything stands; but the reality of all things cannot be described in common language as something that exists, because it is not an ontic existent but the Being of beings or ontological reality. It is simply existence *par excellence*.[36] What is real in everything is its being rather than its essence. In this sense, Being is equivocal, not univocal. It is a common characteristic of all things or the Being of them but with different intensity and weakness. The Being of beings and beings are not two different realities, but one and the same. The reality of Being is, therefore, objective or an ontological reality of all beings. It is what constitutes the very Being of everything. For Mulla Sadra, Being, unlike beings, and unlike the view of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, is not something accidental occurring to its essence. Accidents are caused but Being is uncaused and nothing is prior to it. If we think of Being as something accidental, then it should have a cause. The cause must also be prior to it. If a being that is caused by another being is unified with it, the being that is caused is prior to itself as a cause, or is *causa sui*, which will lead to an infinite regress.[37]

Since Being is not this or that ontic being, it has no describable property. Its abode is not the mind but outside the human mind; it has a dynamic character that creates all modalities of ontic beings, which results in the rise of essences in thinking. Essence, by contrast, is a mental factor and exists for the mind when beings are comprehended.[38] Although Being is that reality without which nothing is possible, its meaning is still obscure. It requires further investigation for Mulla Sadra as well as Heidegger. But in my opinion, Heidegger's understanding of the meaning of Being is beset with ambiguity. It is for this reason that Heidegger's commentators have discussed and understood the meaning of Being in different ways. Kockelmans interprets Heidegger's Being as a process, an activity in which its self-manifestation becomes a truth:

> As the clearing process which sheds light on itself and on beings by the very fact that it illuminates everything, Being may thus be correctly called truth. Yet the term truth here obviously does not mean "agreement"; rather, it means clearing, illumination, original self-manifestation, the emergence of Being and of all beings.[39]

Kockelmans is convinced that Being, like the *Geist* in Hegel's philosophy, is a dynamic ontological reality, which has the character of a happening that comes to manifest itself as a truth.

This interpretation can be supported by Heidegger's own understanding of the meaning of Being in *On the Essence of Truth* (1930), in which he states: 'The primordial disclosure of being as a whole, the question concerning beings as such, and the beginning of Western history are the same; they occur together in a "time" which, itself immeasurable, first opens up the open region for every measure.'[40] The interpretation by Kockelmans becomes adequate and reasonable when Heidegger's understanding of 'Time' and 'Temporality' is taken into account: 'In contrast to all this, our treatment of the question of meaning of Being must enable us to show that the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenology of time, if rightly seen and rightly explained, and we must show how this is the case.'[41] If Being is conceived in terms of time, then it should be dynamic and eventful; it only becomes concealed in this temporal character and its concealment is an active process through the ecstatic projection of *Dasein*. Dreyfus rejects Kockelmans's interpretation. He does not believe that Heidegger regards Being as a process or a happening: 'Heidegger must have been aware of this danger, since at the point where he says being is not an entity, he writes in the margin of his copy of *Being and Time*, "No! One cannot make sense of being with the help of these sorts of concepts'. To think of being in terms of concepts like entity, or process, or event is equally misleading.'[42] Richardson takes the view that in the early works of Heidegger, 'Being' and the world were considered to be equivalent.[43] At the same time he suggests that, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), Being is understood as the pure horizon of meaning, within which the process of the clearing described by Kockelmans takes place.[44] The notion of 'Pure', which is mentioned here and is used again by Heidegger in 'Letter on Humanism', can be understood in the Kantian sense. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents a list of pure categories of understanding within which all material collected by sensibility (*Anschauung*) becomes thought and acquires meaning.[45] For example, the sensuous notions of colour, taste and odour can be kept in the pure category of 'Quality'. Quality is called pure because it is independent of all empirical experiences. It is neither redness nor sweetness, but a category transcending all empirical notions.

When we say that Being is pure, we simply mean that Being transcends all empirical beings, and that the possibility of understanding the meaning of an empirical entity is conditioned by understanding the meaning of Being. Zimmerman has another interpretation: Being for Heidegger is history shaping ways in which beings can reveal themselves and become real.[46] Okrent tried to connect this 'shaping ways of Being in history' with the pragmatic signification of each kind of being that shows itself to us.[47] On the question of Being (*Seinfrage*), Heidegger claims that the question of the meaning of Being constitutes a philosophical inquiry about the meaning of what is asked about. It presupposes guidelines or knowledge, which are

already available to us in some way or another. But raising this question is an indication of our intellectual dissatisfaction with available guidelines, and available knowledge. Being, at this stage, is known and yet not known, or it is obscure and concealed.

Heidegger explicitly states that the subject matter of this inquiry is the Being of beings, which is not an entity.[48] One cannot think of Being as an entity like a tree, a table, a horse or a mountain, and hence it cannot be grasped in terms of empirical concepts; meanwhile, it is also not the *summum genus* of Aristotle's First Philosophy. For this reason, Being is transcendent and a presupposition, for nothing can be presented to us without having been articulated in its Being.[49] As a consequence of this, in order to understand an entity, we need to look into its Being. Our philosophical knowledge is incomplete without apprehending the meaning of its Being. By saying that Being is not an entity, we draw an ontological distinction between Being and beings, but at the same time Being cannot be distinct because no entity can exist without it. In 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger raises another meaning of Being, defining it as power: 'As the element, Being is the "quiet power" of favouring-enabling, that is, of the possible'.[50] He also tries to use Hölderlin's elegy "Homecoming" to interpret the meaning of Being. Finally, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger states,

> All things we have named are, and yet, when we wish to apprehend beings, it is always as though we were reaching into the void. The being after which we inquire is almost like nothing, and yet we have always rejected the contention that the *essent* in its entirety is not. But Being remains indefinable, almost like nothing or ultimately quite so'[51]

Elsewhere, Heidegger takes the view that our attempts to understand the meaning of Being are futile because Being is inaccessible and its meaning cannot be apprehended completely. The reason for this lies in the way Being reveals itself to *Dasein*:

> Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as it constitutes its meaning and its ground.[52]

In this paragraph, Heidegger clearly states that the meaning of Being is completely inaccessible, because it 'for the most part does not show itself at all'. This hiddenness of Being is not something insignificant or temporary that will not influence our philosophical understanding of reality; rather, it is essential and constitutes its meaning. The hiddenness of Being cannot be neglected, but at the same time we find ourselves helpless in our search for its

meaning as the greatest part of it 'does not show itself at all'. In addition to this hiddenness, Being can be obscured. Further, a phenomenon that is uncovered at some point can deteriorate to the point of being obscured again. This deterioration or recovering of Being leads to disguise: 'and the most dangerous, for here the possibilities of deceiving and misleading are especially stubborn'.[53] Despite the perplexity of this issue, Heidegger suggests that the meaning of Being can be revealed in an existential analysis of an entity that has an ontic–ontological significance. That entity is the being of *Dasein* and has the power to question the meaning of its own being and Being as such. This inquiry into the meaning of Being, unlike Mulla Sadra's ontological inquiry, begins with a particular type of being. The hermeneutic circle of this inquiry moves from a part to the whole, or, more specifically, from the being of a particular entity, namely *Dasein*, to Being in general. This can be seen as the line of demarcation between the ontological inquiries of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger. No matter how similar the two inquiries are, they still differ in methodology and metaphysical conclusions. For Heidegger, the existential analysis of the being of *Dasein* reveals the structure of fundamental ontology. An investigation into the meaning of Being thus explains the existence of *Dasein*. The hermeneutic circle then moves from *Dasein* to Being and from Being to *Dasein*.

In rejecting the Cartesian analysis of human existence as a thinking substance, Heidegger describes human being as '*Dasein*' (being-there), because *res cogitans* presupposes its own ontological ground and there can be no thinking without being. *Dasein* is an entity that intends itself and understands its own being. This attitude of *Dasein* is at the same time the realization of its own possibilities, and its existence is always towards these possibilities. For that reason, and in order to make a clear distinction between *Dasein* and other beings, Heidegger ascribes 'existence' (*Existenz*) to *Dasein* rather than '*Existentia*', which describes the being of other beings. *Existenz*, not *existential*, captures the unique meaning of human existence because it is incomplete and dynamic and is a being towards possibilities. On the contrary, *Existentia* signifies the being of a static existence, a term used by medieval metaphysicians to describe something actual. With *Dasein*, its being is at issue; it has to decide about its own being and then comports itself towards that. In opposition to *res cogitans*, *Dasein*'s authentic existence is possibility, not actuality. This terminology and subdivision of Being into *Existenz* and *Existentia* is not found at the beginning of Mulla Sadra's ontological inquiry. Instead he uses common philosophical terminology such as Necessary Being, contingent being, existence, essence, substance, cause, effect and accident. Unlike Heidegger, he did not try to invent a new philosophical language for establishing his new philosophical system and accomplishing his break away from the philosophical tradition of his time.

Mulla Sadra rejects the idea that Being is an entity; the being of an entity is not different from the entity itself. He is also against the description of

'Being' as a universal concept, because a universal concept cannot be used to represent the being of particular beings. This would be equal to saying that 'whiteness' is a white entity.[54] The reality of the relationship between Being and beings is not like that between universals and particulars. The reason for this, as explained earlier, is that Being does not stand as a genus or species for ontic beings. If Being is a genus, it will become an abstract universal concept which can then be apprehended rationally. Mulla Sadra argues from the very beginning of his ontology that Being is neither a concept (such as genus, species, *differentia* or accident) nor conceived rationally: 'and no one has gnosis of it except the mystics, that is, "those who are grounded in mystical knowledge"'.[55] The reality of every ontic entity is in its being. Being is therefore the real ground of everything, including essences. Essences are determined not by their own inner structure but by Being.[56] This, at the same time, claims identity between Being and beings or between beings and their Being. The dynamic movement of Being in modifying itself and manifesting all ontic beings with their essences also determines its completion. The more we move towards Being, the less of essence is exhibited. Essence is then the negation of Being.[57] In my opinion, Mulla Sadra borrowed this idea from Ibn Sina, who described God (the Necessary Being) as an existence without essence. More specifically, we can say that God's essence is inseparable from His existence. Only in case of contingent beings can essences be distinguished from their existences. Existence is positive and real while essence is negative and unreal. For this reason it is more correct to say 'This is a tree' than 'Tree exists', because essence does not exist by itself. It should be attached to existence.[58] However, this interpretation of the relationship between existence and essence should not be understood in terms of metaphysical dualism. For Mulla Sadra, essences are not real beings. They come into existence when Being creates its own modalities or ontic beings, and then essences arise as the result and are joined to them. In the downward movement of Being, when the multiplicity of ontic beings emerges, these beings exhibit diverse essences. With the upward evolutionary movement, this duality gradually disappears until, at the end, being can be grasped in its absolute positivity without essence. According to Fazlur Rahman, this view marks a distinction between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of the Aristotelian–Neoplatonic Muslim thinkers. The latter believed that a concrete being is the combination of existence and essence. Each of these two aspects of a concrete being is real and could exist by itself.[59] Mulla Sadra advocates ontological monism. For him, there are not two realities such as existence and essence, but only existence. It is worth mentioning that Suhrawardi is also a monist thinker, but for him the single reality is essence rather than Being.

Having established the principality and reality of Being, Mulla Sadra deals with the modality or individuation of Being in his philosophical system. This, in my opinion, should be seen as similar to Heidegger's attempt to divide

Being into various ontological regions because every system of ontology requires this division. Generally speaking, in the ontological division of Mulla Sadra there are three modalities of Being: the realm of unity and simplicity includes the Necessary Being, heavenly spheres and the intellect in human existence; the modalities in the realm of diversity and multiplicity consist of the ontic beings and the perceptive soul in human existence; finally, at the lowest level of ontological division, there is the realm of matter with pure potentiality to receive forms. This realm also includes the human body. Human existence is shared by all three modalities. The human intellect is in the first realm, the perceptive faculty belongs to the second, and the body to the third.

The modality of unity and simplicity is the realm of Being, which is identified with God. Being, for both Mulla Sadra and Ibn Sina, is Pure Being because it is without essence and at the same time it is the Being of all beings in the two lower realms of existence. At the rank of Pure Being multiplicity is dissolved, and everything merges into a unity or into a 'simple' and 'One' mode of Being.[60] It is also important to mention that for Mulla Sadra ontology is not separate from theology because he thinks of Being as the highest ground above all beings, as the grounding ground and cause of all being without having a cause or a ground for itself. This grounding ground of all beings is also at the same time conscious of both itself and beings and determines their destination. This can be seen as the distinction between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of Heidegger. Here, Mulla Sadra's ontology could be described as onto-theology, a Heideggerian term used to define this type of metaphysics.[61] In Heidegger's ontology, Being is neither transcendent in this sense nor a rational cause for all beings. It is the Being of beings and their inner reality. God does not enter into Heidegger's metaphysics; his metaphysics remains as ontology.

In the second division, or the modality of diversity and multiplicity, there are ontic beings such as heavenly bodies, souls, animals and inanimate beings. This is the realm of individual beings.[62] Every ontic being in this realm is in constant flux and evolutionary change towards a higher realm to achieve perfection. These beings reach perfection in human existence, as human beings are more intelligent than animals. Some human beings reach a higher rank of existence and become more perfect in their intelligence than others; this is the highest form of Being in the realm of multiplicity beneath the realm of unity.[63]

The lowest degree of modality of Being is the realm of prime matter, which is nothing more than the potentiality to receive forms.[64] Following the doctrine of emanation introduced earlier by some Muslim thinkers such as the members of Ikhwan al-Safa (The Brethren of Purity), al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra believes that prime matter is emanated from Being eternally because Being is not in time. Prime matter represents the lowest level of existence and

becomes existent through receiving specific forms in the evolutionary process from potentiality to actuality. It is also the beginning of the movement towards perfection in the universe, which will be explained in Chapter Five in the discussion on trans-substantial change (*al-haraka al-jawhariyyah*). The two lower realms, namely the realms of potentiality and diversity, originated from the realm of unity and are dependent on that realm ontologically:

> All contingent beings, whatever their distinctions and their ranks of [relative] deficiency and perfection, are existentially dependent, being indigent in their inner-realities towards It, and enriched by It. Thus, these contingent beings are contingent by virtue of their own inner-realities. Due to the First Necessity, The Exalted, however, they are [conditionally] necessary. They are inoperative and perishable only from the perspective of their own inner-reality [and thus are not categorically necessities]. They become a reality due to the Absolute Reality [*aletheia*], [being] the One and the Only: 'Everything that exists will perish except His own face'. His relation to other beings is like sunlight, such that [in itself] it depends on its own inner reality, [while other] bodies are enlightened by it; [they, however] are dark from [the perspective of] their own inner-reality.[65]

Mulla Sadra's division of the ontological realms attributes principality and priority to the realm of unity. To clarify the principality of this realm, he explains three ontological positions, in each of which the nature of this principality is vindicated. He argues that the relationship between being and essence should be understood in three different ways: we think of Being as prior to essence or posterior to it or we state that both of them co-exist simultaneously. When Being is thought of as prior to essence, it simply signifies that Being is independent and can stand by itself without relying on essence. If the primacy of essence is accepted, as stated in the second case, then essence would exist independent of Being and be prior to it, but then for essence to exist it needs existence to rely on and this is a vicious regress. The third position is that essence co-exists with Being simultaneously, and not in it; therefore it relies on another existence for its existence. As a consequence of this, essence cannot be without prior existence:

> If being exists [lit. if the being of existence were an existent], then either it is prior to the essence or posterior to it, or they are simultaneous. If the first is the case, its realization necessarily follows independently without the essence. This implies that priority of the attribute is prior to the subject of its attribution as well as its realization without it. If the second is the case, it necessarily follows that essence exists prior to it [existence] before being, which implies a vicious regress. If the third is the case, it necessarily follows that essence exists with it [i.e., existence] and not in it. Therefore, there would be another existence for it [i.e., for essence]; this [state] implies what has been mentioned. The falsity of the consequences always implies the falsity of the antecedents.[66]

After arguing for the primacy of Being, Mulla Sadra stresses the view that essences belong to the realms of potentiality and multiplicity and are insepa-

rable from beings ontologically. Their separation is only an intellectual fact, which occurs in the realm of thinking. Beings and essences are united in the world but separated in thinking:

> What has been said earlier is sufficient to refute this claim, for, existence is identical with essence in the external [realm] but different from it mentally. Therefore, there is no relation between them except in intellectual consideration. In [such an intelligible] consideration, the relation will have existence which is in its inner-reality is identical with it, but is different from it in the realm external [to the mind]. This kind of ad infinitum is stopped when the intelligible consideration is ceased.[67]

However, it is clear that the only ontological position accepted by Mulla Sadra is the affirmation of the primacy of Being and the intellectually posited status of essence. What he has argued here, then, or has tried to prove, is that Being, not essences, is the sole reality. Essences exist in the mind or only in thinking, not in the external world. The dualism of existence and essence arises only when we think to define a being or understand its nature. More precisely, essences emerge when Being modifies itself in the downward process of further diversified ontic beings. We can talk about essences when these ontic modes of Being are perceived or thought about. But gradually essences disappear when we move upwards to apprehend Being in its pure absoluteness. According to Fazlur Rahman, this view draws a line of demarcation between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of the Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers.[68] The latter accepted the reality of existence and essence outside the domain of thinking and did not insist on the subjectivity of the latter.[69] In contrast, essence here is considered a mode of Being that exists only in thinking; that is, it has mental reality. It is the intellect that conceives essence and separates it from existence; otherwise, there is only existence and nothing else as an ontological reality and the foundation of all ontic modes. It may be possible to find a resemblance between this view of the ontological status of essence and the subjective categories in Kant's philosophy. Our knowledge of the phenomenal world, as described by Kant, is produced through the application of these subjective categories that define the essence of every phenomenon with the assistance of sensibility. This claim is an obvious contradiction with Suhrawardi's metaphysical conviction, in which essence has become real and Being a mere mental concept having no ontological reality of its own. Mulla Sadra, again in his arguments against the doctrine of the primacy of essence, insists that Suhrawardi's conviction can be taken into account when the dual reality of essence and existence is accepted.[70] For Mulla Sadra, Being is real and essence unreal; Being is positive, light, and makes all essences exist, whereas essence is negative, darkness, and imposes limitation on beings. The essence of each Being, which is other than Being, does not exist by itself. It exists by virtue of Being.

Being is, then, an ontological reality while essence lacks that reality and this rank of existence.[71] The problem that arises in describing essence as subjective is with the possibility of understanding essence as something illusory. What does Mulla Sadra mean by insisting on the principality and reality of being? Is there a unity of being and essence in reality? Does that unity make them one real thing? Does that unity presuppose their previous ontological distinction? In answering these questions the ontological status of essences and their relationship to Being can be seen from two perspectives: first, the essences are illusory or images in the mind and have a mental existence like the subjective categories of the faculty of understanding in Kant's epistemology; second, the essences are real and their reality is of the second degree and is not equal with the reality of Being.

The first perspective is also found as a mystic point of view and analogous to the metaphysical position of some Indian thinkers who consider the world to be *maya* or unreal. Based on this type of metaphysical belief the essence of an entity or its being in the sensible world is seen as an illusion. But is this Mulla Sadra's position? Does this Muslim thinker say that the essence of the table I am now using for writing is only mental and has no reality outside my mind? In my opinion, Mulla Sadra's understanding of this problem belongs to the second perspective, which is similar to the view of Ibn Sina and to Hegel's interpretation of unity and diversity. Indeed, even explaining some similarities between Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the meaning of Being and its relationship with essence with that of Kantian metaphysical dualism will not be of great help here. The best way to approach this problem is through Hegel's analysis of the external reality and his interpretation of the world as the self-manifestation of *Geist*. In other words, we need to understand Being as an objective reality that exhibits itself in various forms and gives rise to the multiple beings and their essences. Being in this sense is a dynamic fountainhead of all things as well as their essences. This view is also shared by Heidegger, with the exception that Heidegger's ontology leaves no room for a rational teleology. Also, Hegel's concept of essence should not be taken for the Platonic Forms or the Kantian *noumena*. It is the negation of Being and is derived from the last category in the sphere of Being in dialectical logic. Essence, therefore, cannot exist by itself without relying on Being, but unlike Being, which is immediacy, essence is mediated and known through reflection or understanding.[72] This discussion, in some ways, brings us closer to Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the unity of being. Mulla Sadra also wrote on the graded unity of being in order to justify his doctrine of the ambiguity of Being (*tashkik al-wujud*). In his discussion on the relationship between cause and effect he draws a conclusion on the personal unity of being in line with Ibn 'Arabi.[73] This discussion on the causal relationship also leads to the ontological division of Being stated by Ibn Sina, because Being that is a cause for its own multiple modality or the emergence of the effects becomes a

Necessary Being as in Ibn Sina's ontology and the effects of possible beings. The existence of a cause does not rely on its effects, because it is independent and self-subsistent. Dependence and reliance on something other than itself is the character of the effects. The effects become both necessary when they are accompanied by their perfect cause and impossible in the absence of this perfect cause. When a cause produces an effect, that effect gives rise to its own essence in the mind, and in this way essence is derived from the existence of the effect. An effect, for example the world, is real when it is seen only in its relationship to its cause. This relationship is described as that of a speech to the speaker. The moment the speaker halts speaking, speech becomes impossibility.[74] The necessary relationship between a cause and its effect determines the existence of the effect but the cause (Being) remains without relying on anything for its existence. Can we say that Being causes essences? What is important to remember here is that essences have no reality for Mulla Sadra. They exist in the mind or intellectually. Being as a perfect cause gives rise to its effects or possible beings, and essences affect the possible beings and emerge only in the mind when the possible beings are thought about or conceived. Essences have no existence at all, either primary or attributive.

Essences belong to contingent beings in the realm of diversity and multiplicity. These contingent beings emanate from Being and give rise to essence in the mind.[75] Existence and essence, as mentioned in *al-Masha'ir*, are not separate in the external world; their separation is merely mental. This, however, does not mean that existence and essence are two different realities having a unity. Mulla Sadra plainly rejects the external reality of essences. For him, essences belong to contingent beings; if these beings have more essences they possess less being. Yet their being will never vanish, as nothing can exist as pure essence. The essences become 'concepts' through which we come to know about contingent beings. It is worth mentioning here that Suhrawardi is right in stating that what is known is essence not existence. But in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, knowledge is preconditioned by Being, or epistemology by ontology. Essences, as internal realities, are dependent on the external reality of Being. Although at the highest level of the hierarchy of Being there is pure Being, a kind of existence without essence, we cannot state that at the lowest level there is pure essence or essence without existence. Essences are always with ontic beings and do not exist in themselves. Their relationship as universal concepts to ontic beings (phenomena) remains; as long as one particular or ontic being exists, the essence will also exist. This can be seen as a one-to-one relationship.[76]

The ontological division of Being in Mulla Sadra's philosophy does not depict the world as an aggregate of ontic beings or a container of them. Mulla Sadra sees the world as an organic body in which the evolutionary process of trans-substantial change takes place towards perfection. When an ontic being is described as something 'in' the world, this spatial relationship is not

external like the case of a table in the room. The existence of the table is not dependent on the room, while its existence as an ontic being is unthinkable without its being in the world. Mulla Sadra's understanding of the relationship between Being and beings has similarity with Heidegger's existential analysis of *in-der-Welt-sein*, where being-in-the-world becomes an ontological condition for the existence of *Dasein*.[77] Yet this condition does not constitute the essence of this entity. This relationship between Being and beings is often elucidated metaphorically. As stated by John Quinn, for example, it is like the relationship of ink to written words.[78] One is usually not aware of the ink while reading the words. But in reality it is the ink that is seen and the words do not exist without it. Beings are similarly dual in nature. They have the character of identity as, like the words, they share the ink, but at the same time they represent multiplicity as the words are different from one another in form and meaning. Every being is then identical and different, eternal and temporal, divine and profane, because they are the intensive modifications of Being. By reflecting on this distinction and the ontological difference between the realms of Being we find a way to Being. This is Mulla Sadra's objective in *al-Asfar*. His aim is to move away from the 'darkness of illusion' to the daylight of the truth of existence.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Systematic Ambiguity of Being and the Trans-Substantial Change in the World Order

All beings in the sensible world are actual in some ways or potential in others. In the former, they have been changed from potential to actual but do not possess perfection completely. Their state of actuality is not yet pure and final. It is merely a new state of potentiality for another actuality, without which they will remain immutable without transition from one rank of being to another. The change from potential to actual will be in a state of constant flux, with beings undergoing sudden or gradual change. The state of potentiality, which is prior to the state of actuality, is weak and imperfect. But in order to become more perfect and reach a higher rank, beings need to become actual again. To achieve this, they must be elevated to a higher mode of being where perfection is articulated or actualized.

In this discussion about change we encounter one of the most important philosophical issues in Mulla Sadra's ontology: trans-substantial change (*al-haraka al-jawhariyyah*). This is, in my opinion, the lynchpin of his cosmology and the key concept for understanding the world order. Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the meaning of the world is also based on understanding of trans-substantial change; hence his interpretation of the world is deeply rooted in his metaphysical system. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the world is not a mere material realm like that of Aristotle in which beings are causally and mechanically connected, but a world with integrated parts of a single system with a pre-given purpose. The world is not built on blind and aimless regulation and mechanical self-repetition. It is created by a perfect cause that has determined its meaning and destination.

In advocating this teleological metaphysics for understanding the world Mulla Sadra draws closer to Hegel rather than to Heidegger, and moves away from Aristotle. For Hegel, the world is the self-objectification of the *Geist*; it moves dialectically onward to accomplish perfection and overcome its alienation from *Geist*. The world is seen as an organic whole that changes itself for a purpose predetermined by *Geist*.[1] *Geist* is in a process of transformation in history through contradictions that determine the development of the world. Hegel elaborated this process in the *Phenomenology of Mind* as a temporal structure, which moves from idea to nature and then back to the idea in a better form and with richer content. This dialectical movement is carried

forward by the triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Synthesis, which is the union of thesis and antithesis, is richer than the previous movements in content because it supersedes both and becomes a new thesis for another antithesis, which unites to produce a new synthesis, which in turn becomes a new thesis in a new triad. This dialectic movement from thesis to antithesis and then to unity in synthesis is an irreversible process that continues until *Geist*, as the only sovereignty of the world, achieves self-completion at the final stage of historical development when the estranged world is appropriated by consciousness and transformed.

What Mulla Sadra explains in his doctrine of trans-substantial change can be separated from Hegel's description of the dialectical movement in three ways: first, Mulla Sadra does not advocate the idea of the dialectical movement of the world; second, although the emanation of the world is a temporal generation of the modalities of Being, time and change do not affect Being. Third, God is not immanent but transcendent, so Mulla Sadra's metaphysics should be understood in terms of panentheism rather than pantheism, the former being the metaphysical view that the world is part of God rather than being identical with Him. The world of multiplicity and God are in communion with each other because the former originated from the latter. But at the same time God is transcendent and separated from the world. Mulla Sadra, unlike Hegel, thinks of being in the world as temporality, but this temporality is external to the realm of Being. This is also in contradiction with Heidegger's description of Being as temporality. In Hegel's *Phenomenology*, as in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, temporality is the reality of *Geist*; for example Hegal states:

> Time is just the notion definitely existent, and presented to consciousness in the form of empty intuition. Hence spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time as long as it does not grasp its pure intuition, i.e. so long as it does not annul time. Time is the pure self in external form, apprehended in intuition, and not grasped and understood by the self; it is the notion apprehended only through intuition. When this motion grasps itself, it supersedes its time character, (conceptually) comprehends intuition, and is intuition comprehended and comprehending. Time therefore appears as spirit's destiny and necessity, where spirit is not yet complete within itself; it is the necessity compelling spirit to enrich the share self-consciousness has in consciousness, not put into motion the immediacy of the inherent nature (which is the form in which the substance is present in consciousness); or, conversely, to realize and make manifest what is inherent, regarded as inward and immanent, to make manifest that which is at first within – i.e. to vindicate it for spirit's certainty of self.[2]

The world is not separated from *Geist*, which functions as an immanent cause in the dialectical process of evolution. The actualization of *Geist* happens only in time through stages of development in nature and history. Since the essence of *Geist* is self-determined, history is the realization of freedom

determined by *Geist*. It is a purposeful transition towards the absolute idea where all differences are united in absolute consciousness.

Another distinction between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of Heiddegger lies in the doctrine of emanation. Mulla Sadra, following the Neoplatonist Muslim thinkers such as Ikhwan al-Safa, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, describes the creation of the world as emanation. From the realm of unity or Pure Being emanates the realm of prime matter (potentiality) and the realm of diversity (ontic beings). Accordingly, Being remains both transcendent and the origin and grounding of all that is grounded; in other words, the inner reality of all things. The emanation begins from Pure Being and moves downwards to the lowest level, where the ontic beings, although they do not vanish as beings, are dominated by their essences. Like the dialectic movement in Hegel's logic, this descending process of emanation is from the most general and indeterminate form to the most concrete, but it loses perfection on the way. Descendance is a gradual distance from perfection. At the abyss of this descending process there are beings with more essence but less existence.

In the light of the doctrine of emanation all ontic beings are the same and share identity because they spring from a single fountainhead. In all of them, Being becomes a common character and the inner identity. We can describe all beings in the three ontological realms as things that are. Meanwhile, emanation from Being downwards explains various stages of being with different degrees of perfection. In this case, all beings are not equal or the same in sharing the reality of Being. This unequal distribution of the character of Being with different gradations of the Being of their beings is called the systematic ambiguity of Being (*tashkik al-wujud*):

> The relation between generated creatures and the creator is that of deficiency to perfection, and of weakness to strength. It has been established already that what is realized in a determinate manner are real existents and not essences. Moreover, it has been established that existence is a simple reality which has neither genus, nor a persisting difference, nor species, nor dividing difference, nor individuation. Rather, its individuation is due to its simple essence and the essential distinction between its units and identity [occurs] only by means of [their] being the strongest and being the weakest; and distinction into accidents happens only in bodies. There is no doubt that the Creator in existence is The Most Perfect and in realization The Most Complete [in encounter] with the created. The created is like an emanation of its Creator. In reality [the creature] is not even an effect, except in light of its unfolding [lit. modification] by the Maker, in light of Its Unfolding and Activities.[3]

The systematic ambiguity of Being is another way of expressing the principle of identity in difference and is determined by the descending process of emanation from Being to the lowest ontic beings. Being, as the reality of all ranks of ontic beings, is one and identical in its relation to them, but at the same time it becomes multiplicitous and different. From the perspective of

this principle, there will be no distinction between diverse ontic beings and Being, as all of them belong together. They are only different in their perfection, deficiency, richness and indigence.[4] It should be remembered that imperfection and deficiency infect only the realms of prime matter and diversity. These terms cannot be employed to describe the realm of Being because Being is a unity and pure and has no essence; otherwise, as Mulla Sadra states, 'It would not be the case that a Necessary Existent could exist.'[5] Deficiency and imperfection are not the characteristics of the inner reality of Being. They are characteristics of its gradation in the rank of contingent and posterior beings. Deficiency, limitation and privation are the characteristics of beings rather than Being. They are generated during the process of emanation because 'It is necessarily the case that the created thing is not equal to the creator, nor does emanation equal the source of emanation in terms of rank of existence.'[6] The gradation of Being is also systematic because it is purposeful, unidimensional and determined by Being. It does not leave the emanation of the ontic beings in the world to the caprice of blind chance.

The world of multiplicity and difference is a temporal occurrence and a gradation of Being, because everything emanates from Being and is grounded in it. The non-existence of a particular being precedes its existence in time, and is in the state of non-existence prior to its existence caused by Being. In this process of creation or coming into being of the non-being, an individual being requires a new identity constantly and its existence is not fixed.[7] Mulla Sadra supports this view of the constant renewing of being in the world by quoting Qur'anic verses. He believes that the renewal of ontic beings is a necessary, autonomous or innate process, because all ontic beings are in a relation of identity to Being. Their existence is based on the reality of Being: 'The Maker, in virtue of His durability and endurance, created this creature which is self-renewal in terms of its essence and identity.'[8]

The systematic ambiguity of Being is the particularization of Being in which Being becomes manifest in its own individual modalities. It is not a process similar to the emanation of particulars from the universal Platonic Forms or to Suhrawardi's Lord of Species, simply because the Necessary Being or the source of this particularization is not a universal form but a single transcendent Being. This can be seen as a significant difference between Mulla Sadra's understanding of the Platonic Forms and Suhrawardi's. Although Plato thinks of the universal forms in the immaterial world as ideas or essences in the Suhrawardian sense, Mulla Sadra insists that they are beings rather than essences and placed at a higher rank of existence in the gradation of Being. Besides, he believes that they are not universal ideas but individual beings responsible for generating species at a lower rank of existence. Having discussed the gradation of Being briefly it is useful at this point to explain more precisely Mulla Sadra's interpretation of emanation for understanding his doctrine of the systematic ambiguity of Being. The process

of emanation begins with Pure Being and proceeds to its own particularization, which gives rise to the creation of all beings. This pure Being, as stated before, is neither genus nor species, but a mere identity and simplicity. On the ground of identity, its relationship to beings is equivocal. From this transcendent single and simple Being emanates only one being; the diversity of the ranks belongs to the lower stages of emanation and has no direct contact with the transcendent source. At this stage in understanding Mulla Sadra's ontology, we can state that there are two regions of ontology: the region of Pure Being and that of becoming. The former is characterized by unity and sameness (identity) and the latter by difference, multiplicity and change. These two regions of being are necessarily connected as the former is an ontological ground for the latter. As a consequence of this necessary relationship between ground and grounded, we can conclude that there is no multiplicity without unity. The principle of identity in difference becomes an essential characteristic of the two regions of Being and becoming. Difference becomes possible only on the ground of identity. The presence of unity in emanation is an ontological condition of the equivocal ground for the multiplicity of the grounded.

The systematic ambiguity of Being brings us to the individuation (*al-tashakhus*) of Being, which is discussed by Mulla Sadra in the second volume of *al-Asfar*. The meaning of individuation as understood by him signifies the division of a species into undivided units. For example, Socrates as an individual human being is a member of the human species. The concept of human being can be applied to all members of this species, in which case the universal concept cannot become an individuation. On the other hand, an individual human being is not a universal concept, and cannot be applied to all individuals. The main characteristic of individuation is, then, its inapplicability, unlike a universal concept, to other or multiple things.[9] The individuation of an ontic being is not in its quiddity and it is not something caused by its accident. It is in its existence, which constitutes the reality of its individual existence even in a material form:

> The subsequent deficiency is not from the Principle of Existence. But, it is due to its actualization in [its being in] the second rank and thereafter. Deficiencies and privations happen due to the secondary [existence] due to the fact that they are secondary and posterior [in relation to the First Existence]. The First Being [exists], since its perfection is complete, [and thus] it has no limit. Privation and indigence are derived from the emanation and creation, because it is necessarily the case that the created thing is not equal to the creator, nor does emanation equal the source of emanation in terms of rank of existence.[10]

In the systematic ambiguity of Being imperfection emerges with individuation, which compels all beings to undergo the evolutionary changes towards perfection. Being, as the inner transcendent reality of all beings, is not totally

involved in this evolutionary process, but at the same time it is not detached from it because it is the ontological originator of the beings and their evolutionary movement. Being is a unity and a non-conditional origin of all things. Otherwise, it cannot exist necessarily without a beginning. Perfection is in contrast to individuation, and distancing of beings is in proximity to Being.

The notion of becoming gives rise to the idea of time or the temporality of the realm of multiplicity. As mentioned earlier, Being, as the origin and the cause of becoming, is not affected by time. Time belongs only to the world of multiplicity of ontic beings. Mulla Sadra's understanding of the concepts of time and change is different from that of Aristotle. In *al-Masha'ir*, he states that the concept of 'change' described by some philosophers as a mediation between the realm of Being and becoming does not suit our ontological enterprise, because they understand change to be .an additional intelligible affair, which indicates the transition of a thing from potentiality to actuality, rather than the means by which this transition is made.'[11] Change, for Mulla Sadra, is a constant transition of substance and time is the measure of trans-substantial change. With this kind of change we encounter an ascending process of evolution towards perfection. Becoming is, then, the reverse of the descending process of the individuation of Being. The descending process is a movement from Being to the lowest rank of beings with less of being and more essence. The universality of Being is reduced until it arrives at the stage of individuals where no universality is further possible. The ascending movement is from the lowest rank to the highest, from the least perfect to the most perfect rank of existence. The doctrine of the systematic ambiguity of Being is nothing more than the increase and decrease of the reality of Being and identity in all ontic beings. The beings are distributed among various ranks due to their being prior or posterior, perfect or imperfect, strong or weak. There is always less and more of Being in the real world. It should be remembered that Mulla Sadra is not the first philosopher to advocate the idea of constant flux. Before him Heraclitus held this view on change. This Greek thinker is known for sayings attributed to him such as 'All things are in a state of flux', and 'You cannot step twice into the same stream'.[12] Being, in this constant flux, particularizes itself and gives rise to multiplicity. Heraclitus also believed that reality was an eternal vital fire, kindled in measures and extinguished in measures. These philosophical views were in contradiction to the views of Parmenides and Zeno of Elea, who argued against the possibility of motion, multiplicity and difference. Parmenides thought of Being as consisting of the same stable reality. Zeno, the disciple of Parmenides, went further to prove the ideas of his teacher by arguments known as Zeno's paradoxes.[13] The foundation of Heraclitus' ontology, however, has four principles: first, Being is one in many or unity in multiplicity; second, everything changes constantly; third, Being as a living fire is governed by logos; and fourth, Being includes non-being and both generate becoming. After

Heraclitus, the notion of becoming became one of the pivotal categories in Hegel's logic. Being and non-being (Nothingness) in dialectical logic are identical because neither has determinations and both are abstractions and also different. But it is a contradiction for two things to be identical and different. This contradiction propels the dialectical progress further. As a consequence of this and as the synthesis of being and non-being, 'becoming' prevails when being passes into non-being and non-being into being. These two movements determine the coming to be and ceasing to be of the beings in the world. Although the notion of trans-substantial change was not used by Heraclitus and Hegel, their interpretation of change and motion, particularly where Heraclitus states that one cannot step twice into the same stream, might be interpreted as trans-substantial change because one cannot have the same kind of being at different times. In the case of accidental change, it is true that the substance remains the same without losing its own identity. For example, when water is cold it receives the form of cold. It becomes hot only when it receives the form of heat by throwing off its previous form; water cannot be cold and hot at the same time. In this kind of change, when a being receives a new form – a bud blossoms and becomes a flower – it does not throw away its previous form. The object becomes perfected and elevated to a higher level of existence by receiving a new and better form without negating the previous one. We can say, in the Hegelian sense, that the previous form is superseded (*aufgehoben*), preserved and elevated. The trans-substantial change consists of preserving the past forms and yet transcending them. But it does not leave 'substance' without affecting it like its accidents.

In Mulla Sadra's ontology, as in Heraclitus, change is a constant renewal and an evolutionary process towards perfection. It is not a movement from one place to another like the movement of an arrow in space or a train from one station to another. It is a substantial change that dominates all beings in the ontological region of becoming. The causal foundation of this change in beings is not something stable or unchangeable such as substance in Aristotle's metaphysics; rather, it signifies a being that is at the same time affected by change. There is in every accidental change a substantial change; to put it another way, change in accidents is caused by change in substance. This change is a fundamental transformation of a being from one rank of existence to another.[14] All beings come under the influence of this change; nothing remains outside the domain of change and nothing remains the same for ever. If we think of time as the measure of change, then in this context time for Mulla Sadra becomes the measure of this trans-substantial transformation of beings. It is a dominant reality in the span of life of every ontic being and constitutes the ontological structure of the region of becoming.

Change in the four categories or accidents, an idea advocated by Aristotle and Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophers, is possible with change in substance. As a consequence of this, with the exception of change nothing

remains durable in the region of becoming. For Mulla Sadra the cause of change is a self-moving substance called the inner reality of Being, which is equivocally shared by all beings. It is, as stated by Fazlur Rahman, the specific nature commonly supposed to create the species in the world.[15] This nature is not stable; it is subject to constant change and brings about accidental changes with itself. The arguments developed by Mulla Sadra to support his notion of change are easy to understand. He states that, since the changeable accidents of beings are caused by their substances, substance itself should be changeable because a motionless cause cannot produce a moved accident. A change in accident should be caused by a change in substance. Otherwise there would be no causal relationship between substance and its accidents. In another argument, he insists that change is an evolution towards perfection. Perfection is achieved when there is a substantial change from a less perfect state to a more perfect state of existence, following which there will be no distinction between the accidental and substantial changes in the world because every accidental change is caused by substantial change. The moving being does not remain the same at the moment of change and throughout the change.

For Aristotle, substance is the primary category and is of two kinds: primary and secondary. Primary substance, such as individuals, is neither a predicate of a subject nor in a subject. Secondary substance, such as genera and species, which includes primary substance, is a predicate of a subject in a proposition but not in a subject. All other nine categories are present in the subject. Substance is also considered a stable nucleus. Changes occur only in the four categories of quality, quantity, place and position. For this reason, Aristotle talks about four kinds of change: in a being itself, in quality, in quantity and in place. A change involving the being of a thing is generation and corruption; a change in quality is alteration, in quantity it is increase and decrease, and a change in place is locomotion. These changes will be from a certain status in an entity to its contrary. Substance as the substratum presupposed by the categories has no contrariety so is not affected by change.[16] Some Muslim theologians, such as the Mu‘tazilites (with the exception of al-Nazzam), the Ash‘arites, and Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina and his followers, agreed with Aristotle and accepted the interpretation of the possibility of change in accident. In rejecting the idea of change in substance, Ibn Sina, for example, states:

> However, if it is claimed that motion occurs in substance, then this is a figurative expression. No motion occurs in substance because if a nature of a substance deteriorates, it will be sudden. And if it is originated, it is still sudden. There is no middle perfection between potency and mere act. Substantial form is not subject to increase and decrease, nor is it subject to intensity and weakness. The reason is that if it is subject to these factors, then inevitably either it will remain within the increasing or decreasing of its species, and the substantial form does not change.

> The change rather occurs in the accident of the form, since what was weak and was intensified later is annihilated, whereas the substance is not annihilated.[17]

Ibn Sina, in his discussion on the existence of the physical world in *al-Shifa*, insists that the archetype of the beings remains stable from the beginning to the end of motion in all situations. If we accept this point, then the substance will not require change. The resulting change and motion in beings occurs only in one or more than one of the four categories of substance indicated by Aristotle.

The question that arises here is how can we think of identity when everything is subject to constant substantial change? How can we think that a being which undergoes trans-substantial change is the same being or has an identity? These questions also remind us the problem of personal identity discussed by David Hume in his refutation of the Cartesian concept of self-substance. In criticizing the Cartesian theory, Hume argued that nothing remains the same in the world and that resemblance is the cause of the mistake in substituting the notion of identity: 'For when we attribute identity, in an improper sense, to variable or interrupted objects, our mistake is not confined to the expression, but is commonly attended with a fiction, either of something invariable and uninterrupted, or of something mysterious and inexplicable, or at least with a propensity to such fiction.'[18] The notion of personal identity in this case is fictitious and a product of our imagination, because the changes that happen in a being are slow and gradual. In trans-substantial change, all beings (corporeal and non-corporeal) change constantly. They are originated and renewed at each moment. No single being remains permanently the same. Every being is different and new at every new moment. Mulla Sadra's view regarding this problem is in one respect similar to that of Hume. First, he states that trans-substantial change occurs unnoticed because it is gradual and slow. We think that the change has not occurred and that the being is the same. Second, we attribute sameness to a being because the mind employs universal concepts for describing the essences, which are static. Trans-substantial change is usually noticed when the being of a being arrives at a crucial stage of modification or undergoes a sudden change. In addition to this, Mulla Sadra believes that the identity of a person relies on the intellectual form of that person, which exists in the mind of God. For God, a person is the same; otherwise he or she is not the same.[19] From this interpretation, we can conclude that the renewal process of the world is not externally caused or is not something in contrast to Being. Whatever goes through change is one of the modalities of Being, which has a temporal dimension and belongs to the region of becoming. Since change is the mode of beings, then Being, its modalities and the process of becoming are necessarily connected. Change does not take place in beings as an external event; instead, beings originate change internally, and the external conditions, such as being in the

world and being an individuation, facilitate that change. If we understand the relationship between Being and its modalities without making a substantial distinction between them, all their differences on the ground of their ontological unity and identity disappear. A human being, as a combination of intellect and body, is nothing more than a modality of Being; or, more precisely, an individuation of Being aiming at its own transcendence through the gateway of self-understanding and approximation to Being. In this process of change, this modality of Being rises above the boundaries of its own finitude and limitation as it is capable of understanding the meaning of its own existence and seeks the Truth. It is on the foundation of this ontology and the gradations of the modalities of Being that the meaning of (humanity) within the intentionality of the upward movement should be understood. The way in which Mulla Sadra looks at the gradations of the modality of Being in the trans-substantial change from less perfect to more perfect can be used to address humanity in plurality. Within the development of this modality towards perfection, and by realizing the end in the 'perfect human being', we come across a range of human existence at different ontological–historical stages and different kinds of humanity. Particularly in the light of this kind of change, it is possible for us to talk about less or more humanity at different ranks of existence in the same way we describe a being as smaller or larger.

Mulla Sadra's ontology, in particular the doctrine of systematic ambiguity of Being, bridges the gulf between monism and pluralism. This can be elucidated in considering the principle of identity in difference. Identity is established on the ground of the reality of Being as a simple reality that contains the multiplicity of its own modification. The external reality as Being and the modifications of Being, which have less or more of being, are characterized by unity and diversity. Diversity is a mode of the single and simple reality of Being. The multiple modalities of Being do not exist in themselves as separate realities, as is the case in pluralism. Here, Being is one and all other things that exist are the modalities of this reality.

Since the systematic ambiguity of Being is nothing more than an increase or decrease in the intensity of Being, the trans-substantial change is an existential movement. It happens to Being as a change in the intensification of Being rather than a change in essence. Nor is change in the categories of quality and quantity a gradual or continuous intensification of quality and quantity in a particular type of being; it is their replacement by a new one. Here, Mulla Sadra is talking about the definite quality and quantity of a being.[20] Intensification of a quality, for example 'whiteness' in a body, is not an increase in intensity of the same quality of 'whiteness'. It is a replacement of the former 'whiteness' by another 'whiteness' with more intensity in its 'being' white. This kind of change can be seen as the mutation of the former definite quality and the emergence of a totally new quality. This is the case also with a definite quantity of ontic beings. In a quantitative change, a new

quantity replaces the old quantity. As a result, beings in the world are in constant change and renewal until they reach their own perfection, where no further change is thinkable. What undergoes change but at the same time endures in this evolutionary process is Being as the being of all beings and their unity.[21] Since beings are the modalities of Being, undergo through constant change we can conclude that all kinds of change occur in beings are also Being and by Being. Being is, therefore, in a self-evolutionary process that has no cause except Being itself. Being is the origin of change but still unchangeable.

The existential movement of Being begins with emanation or the descending movement from the realm of unity to the realms of potentiality and multiplicity, which are called the region of 'becoming'. We also call this downward process the particularization of Being. The second phase of change, by contrast, is the ascending movement of the particularization of Being through trans-substantial change upward towards perfection. This descending–ascending process can also be described as a movement from perfection to imperfection and then from imperfection to perfection; form Being to its own particularization and then from the particularization of Being back to Being. The distinctiveness of this two-fold movement of Being is that no accidental change takes place without substantial change. Furthermore, the existential movement of Being is both vertical and horizontal. In the vertical direction, the movement is from the lowest rank to the highest and is governed by the objective of achieving perfection or arriving at the highest rank of being. Here it seems that Mulla Sadra is in agreement with Proclus (410–485), a Hellenic philosopher of the Anaximander School of Neoplatonism who subdivides the process of emanation into horizontal and vertical. For both thinkers, the vertical movement ends with arriving at the most perfect state of existence.

In his discussion of the ascending process and the vertical movement of all beings towards the goal of perfection, Mulla Sadra understood the significance of human existence for the realization of this goal. The foundation of human existence, in the systematic ambiguity of Being, is potentiality. Human existence gradually fulfils itself by moving away from potentiality to actuality. At the start, there is only the realm of pure potentiality emanated from Being, but, in the evolutionary process of vertical trans-substantial change, human existence moves towards the realm of actuality. The journey ends with the emergence of the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), who attains unity with the Intelligences or divine attributes: 'These Intelligences themselves have little to attain by way of perfection, since all their perfections are already realized, for, as Divine Attributes, they are united with God's existence.'[22] The other direction of change, namely horizontal movement, determines the transformation of the world through a succession of infinite forms. This movement is infinite in the sense that it has no end and, unlike the

vertical movement, is not determined by the realization of the end. The trans-substantial movement also resembles the idea of the creative evolution advocated by Bergson, for whom the world is in a constant, multidimensional and vertical process of creative evolution.

Dissatisfied with the mechanistic explanation presented by Laplacean scientific theory and the Darwinian concept of natural selection, Bergson argued that 'mechanism' was inadequate for understanding reality as it neglected other aspects of reality such as duration and creative evolution. The mechanistic account of evolution was also directionless and an outcome of mere chance.[23] For Bergson, the directionality of evolution was a vital field of constant renewal and creativity in which 'duration' rather than physical time played a significant role in transforming life from a lower to a higher state. Evolution was conceived in terms of an unbroken continuation of life in multiple directions. Duration, as the temporality of life, was a single indivisible continuity in which all three elements of past, present and future became integrated parts. To explain this, Bergson presents the analogy of human personality. We are aware of the development in our personality and this development is not seen as a mechanical change in which one state of existence is replaced by another. The change persists and is secured by memory, which establishes the connection between past, present and future.[24] The dissimilarities between Mulla Sadra's trans-substantial change and Bergson's creative evolution arise with directionality and purpose. The former kind of change is unidirectional in its vertical movement and culminates in the perfect human being. The latter is multidirectional and infinite. Another dissimilarity is in the teleological conception of evolution in trans-substantial change, which is that evolution fulfils a predetermined plan of Being. In contrast, creative evolution in Bergson's philosophy is a constant growth, like a snowball rolling down a slope. This growth is also without a predetermined purpose and is thus an ontological foundation for free will.

Mulla Sadra's doctrine of trans-substantial change is directly related to the notion of time and the temporality of the ontic beings in the world. It leads at the same time to the problem of the creation of the world in time. In the history of Islamic thought the Qur'anic paradigm of 'creation *ex nihilo*', which is in contradiction to the Hellenistic principle of '*ex nihilo nihil fit*', created a problem for some Muslim thinkers. Al-Kindi (d. 866) for example used Aristotelian principles and self-evident propositions in order to demonstrate the finitude of the world and to vindicate the Qur'anic paradigm of creation *ex nihilo*.[25] For al-Kindi and the adherents of the Qur'anic paradigm, the world had a beginning and was created in time by God. Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina found a solution to this contradiction between the Qur'anic paradigm of 'creation *ex nihilo*' and the Hellinistic principle in the doctrine of emanation provided by Plotinus, which enabled them to argue that the world was created neither *ex nihilo* nor from the eternal prime matter of Aristotle, but emanated

from God eternally. In trans-substantial change, the creation of the world is viewed from the perspective of the doctrine of emanation, but at the same time this perspective is not void of problems. It is also important to understand that in Mulla Sadra's ontology the world is an event and is originated, which means that it is temporal. At the same time, the emanation of the world still appears to be a-temporal simply because God, who is the efficient cause and the source of the emanation, is eternal and not in time. God's time, as stated by Mir Damad, the teacher of Mulla Sadra, is eternal '*sarmad*'.[26] In addition to this conception of time, Mir Damad refers to '*dahr*' perpetuity and '*zaman*' cosmological time as two different forms of time belonging to two different spheres of Being. *Dahr* describes the relation between the unchangeable divine attributes and the sensible world. *Zaman* is used for the temporality of the ontic beings in the sensible world. *Zaman*, therefore, cannot exist without the world and did not exist before the creation of material objects. The sensible world, which exists in *zaman* and depends on the divine attributes to exist, is outside the sphere of *dahr* and *sarmad*, whereas the divine attributes are in *dahr* but not in *zaman*.[27] Since the creation of the world is in *zaman*, and the sensible world is real, *zaman* should also have an objective reality. It cannot be a mere subjective notion in the Kantian sense. Mulla Sadra accepted the division of time by his teacher, but believed that it required further investigation. On one hand, time is said not to exist objectively. On the other hand, the relation of time to the existential movement in the world provides an ontological ground for the objectivity of time. One can claim that, since existential movement is objective, time as the measure of that movement is also objective. Even the notion of time, which is subjective and exists only in the mind, should be caused by something external and must have a connection with the objective existential movement in the world. This, however, does not mean that time is a quality of the existential movement. It should also be remembered that we cannot think of time without the existential movement in the world.[28] Since the emanation of the world from the divine attributes of God did not happen in *zaman* because *zaman* is not prior to the creation of the world, the world is, then, a-temporally originated.

In trans-substantial change, the only being not affected is Being, because Being is pure actuality and perfect. It can still be argued, however, that since the world is originated from Being and is part of it, then it is Being that changes and transforms itself by itself into its own modalities. This view is also the foundation of the mystic conviction held by some Sufis, who rejected the dichotomy of reality and appearance. From this understanding of time it should be clear that Mulla Sadra's concept of the temporality of the world is different from the concept of the creation of the world in time. Here the world is not in time but exists with time or is substantially temporal. The sensible world and time co-exist and belong together. Temporality is not an indication of the beginning and the end of the world because the world does not end in

Mulla Sadra's ontological interpretation. Temporality is simply the measure of trans-substantial change, and the origination of the world should be understood as a consequence of this change. Every moment in this trans-substantial change is a beginning as well as an end, in this constant and endless process of change. The world is, therefore, endless or eternal but does not stay the same, since the creation of a new substance is the annihilation of the previous one. The world is temporal as it goes through change but is a-temporal because change is permanent and remains for ever; it does not fall into the abyss of nothingness. In each moment there is a being that did not exist before, and this determines the temporal dimension of existence.

Without the objective existence of the existential movement there will not be an objective space–time continuum. The objectivity of time is a logical requirement of the objectivity of the existential movement of Being. At this point, Mulla Sadra's view contradicts Ibn Sina's understanding of the subjectivity of the notion of time, which is derived from movement as continuity or passage from the beginning to the end as a whole.[29] But does this mean that time is something real? If it is real, we need to assert its objectivity just as the objectivity of the world is asserted. But Mulla Sadra insists that time is not independent of the existential movement of Being. It is not like a container in which all events occur. It is one of the dimensions of the world that cannot be separated from it.[30] Elsewhere he states that the existential movement of Being is not different from time because 'the measure and the measured are the same'.[31] On one hand, Mulla Sadra believes that time is not independent of the existential movement of the world and not something real like a being; on the other hand, he identifies time as the measure of the trans-substantial change that accompanies the existential movement. In this way Mulla Sadra's interpretation of time is different from that of his predecessors. Time is neither subjective nor objective, because it is not a mere concept or a fancy that has no representation in the external world. nor can it be seen as something that exists outside human thinking. Time is, rather, a subjective–objective, existential and non-existential dimension of reality. It is the measure of an objective existential movement, and an inherent function of the world, which is conceived intellectually.

Time is also eternal. The temporality of time is eternity for two reasons: first is emanation, through which the world came into existence and which is eternal. Second, whatever is thought to be prior to time is necessarily in time, because priority involves time.[32] Time, in this respect, is distinct from space, because the finitude of space does not involve space beyond space. The notion of time prior to time involves real time because, as Mulla Sadra believes, the reality of time is in the mind.[33] Here, Mulla Sadra thinks of time as something subjective. Does his notion of subjectivity prove time to be an essence because essence for him is an intellectual property? Time is not a mere subjective notion; it has a reality of its own as well. In this case, the status of

time is not like that of essence. For this reason, Mulla Sadra insists that time is something positive and has a peculiar existence, and has an essence as well.[34] Time, therefore, has existence as well as essence. The existence of time is the reality of time inherent in the trans-substantial movement of Being, while its essence, or the mental concept of time, is the relational factor of the continuity.[35] Mulla Sadra does not claim that time is subjective or objective; it is only from his conceptions of the systematic ambiguity of Being and trans-substantial change that we arrive at this inference.

To return to the differences between Mulla Sadra's and Heidegger's ontology, one is that this Muslim philosopher accepted the doctrine of emanation. For Mulla Sadra, the world emanated or originated from Pure Being. Emanation can be seen as a temporal origination of the world, as everything in the world is determined by trans-substantial movement. All beings in the world go through change and are preceded by the temporal non-existence of their beings. Ontic beings continually come into existence and pass away. Every moment in this substantial change is death and rebirth of the same being with a new substance and a new form. Death exists only in this sense as a constant substantial change. Non-being, like being, becomes the reality of all beings. The world is, thus, a temporal surfacing of the reality of Being, which continues eternally. It is a temporal origination from a non-temporal origin. The temporal originality of the world and the notion of perpetual trans-substantial change seem to contradict one another. It is stated on one hand that the world is originated and on the other Mulla Sadra insists on the idea permenant change. Here, perpetuity does not mean that the world is eternal in the sense that it has no beginning, or that everything existed eternally without beginning. If the world is in a state of flux, nothing will remain perpetual, and only in this regard can we say that the world is in constant change and renewal. This interpretation is also doomed to failure, because the vertical direction of existential movement has a definite objective end. The trans-substantial change ceases when it reaches the highest rank of its existence and perfection. In addition, nothing attains or rises above the supreme level of the ontological rank of Being, and change does not govern beings, which are pure actuality. If we consider an immaterial being such as 'intellect' to be entirely actuality without potentiality, the intellect will not change. Change is a movement from potentiality to actuality but not in an Aristotelian sense because it includes change in substance. It is for this reason that Pure Being and the divine attributes are not affected by change. Potentiality is the state of imperfection while actuality is not. What does Mulla Sadra mean by perpetual change? Does he mean that the realm of potentiality and multiplicity remains eternally? Does this movement end by attaining perfection or the highest possible rank of existence?

Since emanation is thought to be eternal and constant, it seems that 'becoming', in Mulla Sadra's systematic ambiguity of Being, is endless. In

their various ontological ranks, ontic beings differ in their intensity, priority, posteriority, perfection and imperfection. They succeed one another vertically as well as horizontally. There will be a beginning and an end for an ontic being that exists at a particular time and space but that is not the case with Being as the inner reality of that ontic being, because trans-substantial change will elevate this being from a lower to a higher rank of existence with a new substance and form. There is a constant substantial change, which gives a new identity to the existents at every moment. In the region of becoming, nothing remains the same and nothing resists the stream of this continuous flux and renewal. Finality can be achieved only in the realm of unity with Pure Being. In the ontological region of history truth, knowledge and moral values, under the impact of this flux of becoming, also change constantly. Nothing in the human world can be seen as eternally existent. Another important point is that, with this great novelty in the world, trans-substantial change, like the dialectical movement in Hegel's philosophy, is necessary and determines the progress towards perfection without leaving individuals room for free choice. This point can be challenged, however, on the same ground as in Hegel's philosophy: since trans-substantial change occurs in Being by Being, it is self-determined and hence a free existential movement. Freedom in this case is interpreted on the ground of necessity. The plausibility of this argument is, however, in the premise that the changeable world is not to be different from what determines the change. But what determines the change is not individual free will. It is something beyond that, which brings everything under its own determination. This argument is better understood in the light of Hegel's category of being-for-itself. In the sphere of 'Determinate Being' in his logic, there are two dialectical aspects: being-in-itself (positive) and being-for-other (negative). These two aspects unite and their union becomes True Infinite. The essential character of this new category is being-for-itself.[36] The new category is without external limitation and its otherness is not something other than itself. Consciousness, for example, as being-for-itself, is self-consciousness. It is aware of itself as well as the external world. The external world, at the same time, is nothing but the self-manifestation of consciousness. It is idea in its otherness. In this case the contradictions between consciousness and the external world (its otherness) are negated and consciousness becomes self-related and a being-for-itself. It has no otherness and no external limitation. This is thought to be a necessary ground for freedom in Hegel's philosophy. Similarly in Mulla Sadra's ontology being determines its own modalities and transforms them constantly.

The existential movement of the world is not blind or capricious. It is for a purpose. Being, which is identical with God in Mulla Sadra's onto-theology, has no direct causal relationship with this continuity or with the trans-substantial change of its own modalities. There is an intrinsic motive vehicle responsible for accomplishing this task. This motive is the mystic force of

love (*'ishq*), which is present in everything and creates in lower-ranked beings the desire to long for beings in the higher ranks of existence. The notion of love as the main force in the world depicts a mystic (Sufi) influence on Mulla Sadra's metaphysical thinking. Before Mulla Sadra, Ibn Sina expressed similar views in *Risala fil 'Ishq* (*A Treatise on Love*), in which he stated that all entities in the world, including matter, move under the sway of cosmic love.[37] The relationship between the self and the Reality in Sufism is primordially emotional rather than theoretical. It is the emotional motive *('ishq)* which leads to the rise of the mystic way of cognition (*ma'rifah*). The emotional motive is not only primordial; it is also the ontological constitution of the world, including the self. Ibn Sina also believed that the self was born with this intrinsic motive: 'Ardent love is innate' all things flow from God in a process of necessary emanation and return to Him in a process of necessary love.'[38] The primacy of emotion, however, does not nullify the significance of cognition. The self can approach Reality passionately without appropriating it epistemologically. It is also this emotional motive that elevates the self to the stage where it can experience Reality.

Mulla Sadra is in agreement with Ibn Sina that even prime matter is infected by love. His argument supporting this idea is based on the positivity of prime matter. Prime matter is the realm of potentiality and potentiality is something positive, or that which exists. Being is a reality commonly shared by all existents, including prime matter. To all beings, whether at the level of potentiality or actuality, the divine attributes (knowledge, will and power) function with various degrees of intensity. These attributes belong to Being or the inner reality of all beings. Prime matter, which is at the bottom of the descending process of emanation and is considered to be pure potentiality, is capable of receiving forms and becoming actual. More specifically, it has longing and affection for forms. This mystic love penetrates all modalities of being as a motive to assist their progress towards perfection. It prevails everywhere, and wherever there is existence there will be love and longing for perfection.[39] In clarifying this point, Fazlur Rahman remarks that the degree of intensity of 'love' is not only in consciousness, such as in human beings. It also exists equally in all beings. Matter, as the most deficient and lowly ranked of all beings, should have a high degree of intensity of 'love' for the higher ranks.[40] As a consequence, the world, including inanimate beings, can be seen as a loving body with various degrees of intensity of love and longing for perfection. When human beings attain unity with Intellects or divine attributes through the form of the perfect human being, their yearning reaches the point of satisfaction. They no longer yearn for a higher rank of existence, because their longing for perfection will no longer exist. The world is, therefore, characterized by renewal; the things and events of the past are in the past and those of the future are yet to come. Temporality is the progress of the world as a constant becoming and creation. Every new

moment is a non-existence that comes into being through trans-substantial change.

The main consequences of the doctrine of trans-substantial change are religious; for example its impact on the notions of resurrection and divine retribution. They can also be philosophical. It cannot be denied that the doctrine expounded by Mulla Sadra changes our understanding of the two religious notions and also opens a discussion on the transmigration of the soul. The transmigration of the soul has been discussed in the history of Muslim philosophy by Muslim philosophers such as Abu Bakr al-Razi, Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi, in addition to Mulla Sadra. They raised the possibility of the transmigration of the soul from one species to another, for example the human soul to animals or plants. Of particular importance to Mulla Sadra's ideas is Suhrawardi's understanding of this question. Suhrawardi deals with the transmigration of the soul in several books, but in *Hikmat al-Ishraq* he argues that human bodies are in a position to receive a managing rational soul or managing light, while animals receive only imperfect human souls:

> Whatever moral habit captures the commanding light, whatever dark state becomes established in it and becomes its support, the commanding light must transfer its attachment after the corruption of its fortress to a fortress corresponding to that dark state: a fortress of one of the brute animals. When the commanding light departs from the human fortress, it is darkened and desirous of darkness. It does not know its source or the world of light. Wicked states have become fixed in it, and it is drawn to the brute fortress of other animals, and the darkness beckons to it.[41]

Suhrawardi argues for the transmigration of the soul by insisting that the condition of life after death is dependent on the balance of knowledge and action in the previous life. With regard to the new form obtained by the human soul, he puts forward the notion of 'suspended forms' (*suwar al-mu'allaqa*). These forms, like the Platonic forms, are transcendent but are not in the immutable rank of existence. Some are dark (evil) and some luminous (good). After death, the wicked souls, those that failed to live a balanced life between knowledge and action, are gathered in hell and deprived of their suspended form in accordance with their character in the previous life.[42] Shahrazuri, the disciple of Suhrawardi, clarifies the position of his master by saying that Suhrawardi accepted the transmigration of the human soul to an animal body, but rejected the transmigration of the human soul into plants and they will be given bodies of the lower rank of existence.[43] When we come to discuss transmigration in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, particularly in the light of trans-substantial change, we expect him to argue against it. Trans-substantial change is an irreversible progress and cannot be seen as a movement from a more perfect or developed to a less perfect and undeveloped rank of existence. A being, like a human soul in a developed human body, is not expected to take

an animal body, which is less perfect than a human body and is at a lower rank of being. In other words, demotion in trans-substantial change is not only absurd but impossible.[44] Mulla Sadra'a denial of the transmigration of the soul, according to Fazlur Rahman, is beset with a problem. In Islam, the notion of bodily resurrection implies the transmigration of the soul in so far as it is thought to be a reunion of the soul with a new body.[45] Mulla Sadra's treatment of this matter takes the middle position between the views of those who believe in the survival of the intellect after death, and those who accept the survival of the body as well. He explains that in the afterlife the human intellect is able to apprehend the general ideas in the rational realm in the way it apprehends and perceives different physical objects in this world. But the apprehended general ideas are not mere concepts without a reality of their own. They are real, ontological and identical with actual existence, and are experienced by the human intellect. What then happens to the human body at death? Is it disjoined from the soul and does it then decay? Will the human soul be given a new body? To answer these questions Mulla Sadra, like Suhrawardi, talks about the World of the Images (*'alam al-khayal*). The bodies of the undeveloped souls, the souls that have committed sins, deteriorate at the time of death and are not reassembled as before. In order to survive physically, they create a material body for themselves by externalizing their inner psychic states in the form of a body in the World of the Images. Thus a human soul that is guilty of committing a sin will imagine itself as an animal.[46] The important questions that arise here are: what is the destiny of the human soul that has gone through trans-substantial change? Am I the same sinner of yesterday who committed a sin to be punished or substantially transformed into another human being? If I am not the same person, why should I be punished for the sins committed by me in the past? There is, no doubt, a problem here. But Mulla Sadra provides two different answers to these questions. On one hand, he believes that the identity of a person relies on the intellectual form of that person, which exists in the mind of God.[47] On the other hand, the soul is thought to survive throughout the evolutionary changes, and that this helps the person to retain an identity.[48] This solution, which has similarity with Descartes's view on the human soul as the self-substance, is in my opinion in contradiction with the implication of the trans-substantial change.

The philosophical consequences of trans-substantial change can be summarized in three points: the temporal contingency of the world; the infection of being by non-being or nothingness; and the relativity of truth and values.

Mulla Sadra demonstrates that the world is in constant substantial change. This ontological view is an indication of the non-being of beings that have not yet come into existence. Non-being or nothingness is at the heart of the world. That is to say, an existent is preceded by its own non-existence.[49] The passage

of being into non-being and of non-being into being is 'becoming', which was also demonstrated by Hegel and discussed earlier, and in contradiction of Aristotle's understanding of Nothingness. In Aristotle's ontology, non-being is neither in motion nor at rest, because for non-being to move it should be in a place, which it is not, and if it were it would be somewhere.[50] Mulla Sadra seems to have borrowed the idea of coming-into-being from Mir Damad. Sabzawari, in explaining the relationship between eternities and becoming in time, states that becoming through perpetual duration or constant creation was proposed by Mir Damad. He further maintains that, for Mir Damad, the coming-into-being of the world by way of becoming through perpetual duration is a temporal coming-into-existence, or 'the precedence of "preceding non-existence" over the existence of a thing by way of separable precedence of it, i.e., of the non-existence'.[51] This is an interesting point in Hegel's logic as well as in the phenomenological interpretation of the structure of consciousness in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Being, for Hegel, is an undeduced beginning and pure because it has no determination or qualification. It is the most abstract category in his dialectical logic. It is nothing more than a simple 'isness'.[52] Since this undeduced beginning has not passed over into another or its opposition, it is self-identical. When it produces its opposite it undergoes change and becomes different. But saying that Being is an immediacy and has no determination except 'isness' implies mere emptiness and the equivalent of 'Nothing' or non-being.[53] Being, therefore, becomes the birthplace of nothingness, and the two categories become the first two oppositions in Hegel's logic holding the relationship of identity in difference. When 'Being' and 'Nothingness' pass over into one another they produce the category of 'becoming'. When understood in the light of the dialectical interpretation in Hegel's logic, the meaning and significance of becoming as an important category in Mulla Sadra's ontology can be grasped. It is a process that involves being and nothingness. Being of a being is subsequent to its nothingness; this is the temporal origination of the ontic being in the realm of potentiality and diversity. Sartre also deals with the problem of Nothingness in detail. But, unlike Mulla Sadra and Hegel, he insists that Pure Being cannot become the source of Nothingness and that the only being responsible for bringing nothingness into the world with itself is consciousness. This is described by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* as follows:

> We perceived that nothingness can be conceived neither outside of being, nor as a complementary, abstract notion, nor as an infinite milieu where Being is suspended. Nothingness must be given at the heart of being, in order for us to be able to apprehend that particular type of realities which we have called *négatités*. But this intra-mundane Nothingness cannot be produced by Being-in-itself; the notion of Being as full positivity does not contain Nothingness as one of its structures. We cannot even say that Being excludes it. Being lacks all relations to it.

> Hence the question which is put to us now with a particular urgency: if Nothingness can be conceived neither outside of Being, nor in terms of Being, and if on the other hand, since it is non-being, it cannot derive from itself the necessary force to 'nihilate itself', where does Nothingness come from?[54]

To prove his point, Sartre gives the example of finding Pierre in the café where Sartre tries to say that Nothingness is experienced by consciousness. Satre also argues with Kant's view that negation is the quality of a judgment (proposition), and Nothingness is logically prior to negation; that we experience Nothingness and negation before making a judgment.[55] The distinction between the existentialist views of Mulla Sadra and Sartre is in the origin or birthplace of Nothingness. Mulla Sadra insists that all contingent beings, including the human intellect, are preceded by their own non-existence in the world. For Sartre, Nothingness is a characteristic of the ontological structure of consciousness. The being of non-conscious being is not infected by Nothingness.

As far as the distinction between Being and Nothingness is concerned, it is clear, at least for Sartre, that both can be experienced intuitively as two realities. In Hegel's dialectical logic, they pass over into one another and their causal relationship can be recognized. But what is the distinction between one non-being (nothingness) and another? Is there a causal relationship between them? Mulla Sadra does not engage in this discussion, but Sabzawari, one of the followers of Mulla Sadra, says that the distinction between non-beings is imaginary and they have no causal relationship: a non-being cannot be a cause for another non-being. Is it possible, then, to say that the non-being of clouds is a cause for the non-being of rain? Or that the non-existence of oxygen is a cause for the non-being of human life? Sabzawari would say that such statements, which show the causal connection between two non-beings, are only the realization of the absence of beings such as the non-presence of clouds and rain, and that in reality we are not dealing with non-being or nothingness.[56] But when we study read Sartre we find out that the realization of the non-presence of a being, as in the case of searching for Pierre in the café, is a legitimate ground for experiencing the non-being of Pierre. It is the non-being or non-presence of Pierre that produces a negative proposition such as 'There is no Pierre in the café'. If we go back to the causal relationship between the non-existence of oxygen in space and the non-existence of human life and say that 'Such a void is the cause of death', we are making an affirmative proposition that explicates the causal relationship between two non-beings in an affirmative way. Meanwhile, we cannot deny that every affirmation is a negation. Void, here, can be understood as the absence of oxygen; so that the non-being of oxygen in space causes death or the non-being of life. Sabzawari's argument for the non-existence of the causal relationship between non-beings can thus be refuted.

Another philosophical consequence is that trans-substantial change leads to the relativity of truth and values. The doctrine of trans-substantial change deconstructs the metaphysical foundation of universal truth and values, as nothing is considered to be eternal and stable in the world. Everything is in constant change, including human society and our understanding of reality. As a consequence of this, no system of belief can claim to be absolute and final, because the novelty prevails. This consequence also had a profound impact on Mulla Sadra's understanding of politics, in particular political Islam, which proclaims the divinity and universality of its discourse. Mulla Sadra made a vivid distinction between religion and politics or between religious laws and political laws and rejected the identity of the former with the latter. Religious laws are characterized by generality and necessity, and political laws by particularity and dependence on the human situation.[57] This distinction between religion and politics in Mulla Sadra's philosophy stands in contradiction to Shi'ite political thought, which claims a necessary link between religion and politics, and states that no true Islamic political system is established without religious laws. A true Islamic political system is possible on the foundation of the religious laws and the presence of an imam (a spiritual leader and a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) to implement the law. Although Mulla Sadra is a Shi'ite thinker and accepts the doctrine of the imamate, he still believes in constant change in nature and history. For him, however, trans-substantial change rules over both nature and history; ontology and social system are necessarily interconnected. It is not possible to understand Mulla Sadra's political philosophy without understanding his metaphysics. For him, as for Hegel, metaphysics is the foundation of all natural and historical phenomena.[58]

Any socio-political system existing at any stage of human history is not final and should be superseded by a social system richer and more perfect in content. According to Mulla Sadra, in a perfect society all members live together in harmony and cooperate to achieve the highest good and the full realization of Truth. In contrast, in an imperfect society the members cooperate to execute evil.[59] Since change is the essential characteristic of the world, the imperfect society should also be seen in the light of the evolutionary process of the existential movement of the world. The evolutionary process of the world is towards perfection rather than deterioration. Mulla Sadra's view on political leadership in a perfect society is similar to that of al-Farabi in *Mabadi Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*. Al-Farabi, like Mulla Sadra, makes his metaphysical interpretation of reality the foundation of his political philosophy. The socio-political system in a 'perfect society' needs to function in harmony with the system of the universe designed by the First Cause. For al-Farabi, this interconnection is founded on the doctrine of emanation. Following this doctrine, al-Farabi places his view of the relationship between the state and civil society in the hierarchy of the system of the universe, in

which the emanation of various forms of being flows from the First Cause. This metaphysical structure is a political model.[60] The diversity of emanation represents varying social groups and political institutions, which are subordinated to the authority or to the will of the supreme statesman. Mulla Sadra, like al-Farabi, holds the view that a leader of the perfect society should be someone of sound mind and body who has attained the rank of actual intellect:

> That man [the leader] is a person over whom nobody has any sovereignty whatsoever. He is a man who has reached his perfection and has become actual intellect and actual being thought (intelligized), his representative faculty having by nature reached its utmost perfection in the way stated by us; this faculty of his is predisposed by nature to receive, either in waking life or in sleep, from the Active Intellect the particulars, either as they are or by imitating them, and also the intelligibles, by imitating them. His Passive Intellect will have reached its perfection by [having apprehended] all the intelligibles, so that none of them is kept back from it, and it will have become actual intellect and actual being thought.[61]

The leader of the perfect society is not the lawmaker but the executor of the law, which is divine and pre-given. Like the ruling organ in the human body, the leader is chiefly responsible for the rise and fall of state and society. The bearer of such responsibility must further possess two kinds of qualities: natural (inborn) and acquired. Natural qualities are beyond one's capacity to choose or acquire after birth. For example, the statesman cannot choose which family or situation to be born into. The prime inborn quality, which precedes all other qualities, is that a statesman is born as an *imam*; in the Shi'ite context, he should be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, a male from his household, *ahl al-Bayt*:

> This is the sovereign over whom no other human being has any sovereignty whatsoever; he is the *imam*, he is the first sovereign of the excellent city, he is the sovereign of the excellent nation, and the sovereign of the universal state (the *oikumene*).[62]

Although al-Farabi does not mention in *Ara* that the leader should be from *ahl al-bayt*, it is clear that the notion of the imam, which is explicitly expressed in *Ara*, logically presupposes this understanding of leadership. The imam is the only statesman qualified to lead a perfect society, politically as well as spiritually. He is a leader who is granted revelation or is in contact with God, receiving inspiration from the First Principle to guide his perfect society. For Mulla Sadra, the leader should be a theosopher (*hakim*) who, on attaining perfection in all intellectual faculties, becomes a prophet.[63] This view seems incompatible with Mulla Sadra's idea of the distinction between religion and politics. The leader as theosopher and prophet in a perfect society has reli-

gious as well as political authority. His rule becomes the execution of the divine will and law. The compatibility of religion and politics belongs to the realm of becoming, where nothing remains stable, or where politics, like religion, becomes universal. But since nothing escapes trans-substantial change, religion and politics must each go through change from a less perfect to a more perfect stage of existence.[64] The purpose of political life, in the perfect society, is spiritual salvation, so the political order will be divinely oriented and the state will be based on the divine creeds. Mulla Sadra's analysis of politics is, in the light of his metaphysics, an intellectual attempt to explain the place of human beings in the world for achieving collectivism and divinity. He believes that politics is the social sphere where the individual soul experiences belonging to a social system and works with other individuals for a better form of collective life.[65] He also believes that the leadership in the perfect society is the real guardian of social justice and the divine laws.[66] Political life is, therefore, imperative in the evolutionary process of existence. The achievement of perfection and the realization of Truth are possible in history. The worldly life is a ladder to ascend to another form of living in the Hereafter as another aspect of existence.

As mentioned earlier, Muslim philosophers before Mulla Sadra, under the influence of Aristotle, tended to acknowledge the reality of change only in the form of accidentality. For Mulla Sadra what was foremost in his mind was change in the form of becoming, with substantial and accidental changes. His novel interpretation of the world is a genuinely innovative philosophical project which involves the development of a new intellectual outlook, conceptual framework and values. The task of philosophy is to actively interpret reality rather than give a mere conceptual translation of it. To achieve this, the creative interpretation should break from tradition and prepare the way for the future. Next, in the light of this innovative interpretation, Mulla Sadra's existential philosophy proves to be far from infected by dogmatism and prejudice, because for him every philosophical conviction remains transitory. Virtually everything about the world, human society, truth, values and knowledge, becomes a prey to change and nothing is immutable in the world except novelty.

CHAPTER SIX

Mulla Sadra and the Problem of Knowledge

This chapter contains an account of Mulla Sadra's theory of knowledge. From the outset, it should be remembered that the problem of knowledge in Mulla Sadra's philosophy developed out of his ontological system. I also argue that his epistemology should be understood in the light of his interpretation of reality. The doctrine of the primacy of Being is the foundation of the possibility of knowledge. It suggests that in order to know something we need to begin with its existence. Being becomes an ontological condition for knowing. To make this issue more adequately appropriated, our task will be at the start to trace the notion of intuitive knowledge in the history of Muslim philosophy, which plays a significant role in Mulla Sadra's epistemology, and then continues with an explanation of Mulla Sadra's understanding of knowledge and its source.

Before Mulla Sadra, Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi and the Sufis advocated the idea that reality should be apprehended directly by intuition rather than by rationalistic discourse. Because Mulla Sadra's treatment of the problem of knowledge is so similar to Suhrawardi's, it is difficult to make a distinction between them. Nevertheless, what is apprehended by intuition for Mulla Sadra is the reality of Being rather than essence. Being and knowledge are not two different things, but are intertwined. Being, by revealing itself or being revealed, renders knowledge possible and knowledge makes the truth of Being comprehensible.

Intuition is the source of knowledge for Ibn Sina. Knowledge is obtained intuitively by the human mind when it comes into contact with the external reality; the active intellect responds by providing the content of intuition. The content of intuition, as Kant also states in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, is provided from outside. However, Kant does not deal with the external source of knowledge in a mystical way. For him, the faculties of sensibility and understanding are limited and determined by the external content of the phenomenal world and by the subjective necessary conditions or forms such as space and time, in the case of sensibility, and the table of the categories in the case of understanding. Also, for Ibn Sina and Kant, the human mind is empty without the given external content, and knowledge is possible as the result of the interaction between internal and external conditions. To clarify this point, Ibn Sina uses the metaphor of a mirror, saying that the human mind before acquiring knowledge is like a tarnished mirror, which can be polished by knowledge if it is turned to the light of the sun (the active intellect).[1] The

human mind then acquires knowledge by intuition and does not rely on the phenomenal world as do sense-experience or rationalistic discourse for obtaining intuitive knowledge. This kind of knowledge, as Majid Fakhry remarks, 'stems from that supernatural or supermundane agency, which governs all the process of generation and corruption, including the process of cognition, in this world, i.e., the active intellect'.[2]

Acquiring knowledge by intuition varies from individual to individual. Those who get closer to the active intellect are enlightened by attaining the intelligible forms stored in the active intellect, and rely totally on intuitive knowledge rather than discursive knowledge to reach the rank of the prophethood.[3] Intuitive knowledge is, therefore, not the product of the human intellect but springs from a divine source. It is the radiation of the active intellect upon the intellect of the seekers of the truth. Here, Ibn Sina makes a distinction between four types of human beings: the highest are those who have acquired prophecy and can create miracles due to the development of their intuitive and their imaginative power and their contact with the active intellect. The second type includes those who have developed their intuitive but not their imaginative powers. The third type is those who have developed their theoretical power but not their practical power. Finally, there are the human beings who have developed only their practical power.[4]

Another important thinker after Ibn Sina is Suhrawardi, to be discussed here, whose epistemology had a significant impact on Mulla Sadra. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this Muslim thinker is critical of discursive knowledge and, like Ibn Sina, relies on intuition or knowledge by illumination (*ishraq*); Nevertheless he does not discard discursive knowledge. He even finds sense-perception necessary for acquiring knowledge as he believes that there are certain things which can be known only by perception.

Suhrawardi's epistemology, discussed in *Hikmat al-Ishraq* and *al-Mutarahat*, begins with a critical evaluation of Arsitotle's analysis of knowledge by definition. Against Aristotle, he argues that knowledge by definition does not necessarily include the essential characteristics of an entity. Other non-essential qualities or attributes should also be taken into account. He develops an argument against the definition of definition as '*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*', or connotative definition. His argument, however, is grounded on the idea that certain things cannot be defined in accordance with this rule in Aristotelian logic. To render definition possible, Aristotle insists on the point that a genus plus a *differentia* are required. When human beings are defined as 'rational animals', rationality becomes a *differentia* and animal a genus. But 'colour', for instance, cannot be known by definition because it is a genus without *differentia*. It is a simple idea and a simple truth that has nothing other than itself to become a predicate for.[5] This view of Suhrawardi is reminiscent of G. E. Moore's argument against the definition of goodness. In *Principia Ethica* Moore states:

> My point is that 'good' is a simple notion, just as 'yellow' is a simple notion; that, just as you cannot, by any manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is. Definitions of the kind that I was asking for, definitions which describe the real nature of the object or notion denoted by a word, and which do not merely tell us what the word is used to mean, are only possible when the object or notion in question is something complex. You can give a definition of a horse, because a horse has many different properties and qualities all of which you can enumerate. But when you have enumerated them all, when you have reduced a horse to his simplest terms, then you can no longer define those terms.[6]

Mehdi Amin Razavi believes that Suhrawardi's criticism of knowledge by definition is a 'radical departure from Aristotle.'[7] In my opinion, Suhrawardi's point of view, which is similar to that of Moore, was originally from Socrates (Socrates' view on definition is discussed in Plato's *Meno*). In this dialogue, Socrates presents the ground for definition as a response to questions such as 'What is excellence?' or 'What is health?' In answering these questions, Socrates tries to define a term first by stating what is common to it. In this case, Aristotle's later definition of genus with *differentia* is one of the possible ways but not the only way of defining a term:

> Well, is it only concerning excellence that you think this, Meno, that there is one excellence of a man, another of a woman and so on; or do you think the same about health, too, and size and strength? Do you think health is one thing in a man, another in a woman? Or is it the same pattern everywhere if indeed it is health, whether it is in a man or in anything else whatever?[8]

Socrates also remarks that in some cases there are other ways of defining the same thing. For example, in defining figure, colour, smell or taste, we cannot follow the previous rule of definition, because no *differentia* is involved in defining these terms:

> What then is this which has this name 'shape'? Try to say. Suppose you said to the person who asked you in this way either about shape or colour, 'I don't even understand what you mean, sir, nor yet do I know what you are saying'; perhaps he would be surprised and say, 'Don't you understand that I am looking for what is the same in the case of all these?' Or would you not even be able to answer in this case, Meno, if someone were to ask you 'What is it that is the same in the case of all these, the curved and straight and all the other things that you call shapes?' Try to say, so that you can indeed practise for the answer concerning excellence.[9]

In defining figure or colour, Socrates thinks of the second alternative, that of assuming the definition of terms such as figure or colour not by a genus and *differentia* because they do not have *differentiae*. Suhrawardi also, like Socrates, believes that colour is pure genus without *differentia*, and therefore should be known by another cognitive tool directly, namely perception rather

than definition. This introduces the role and significance of sense-perception in Suhrawardi's epistemology.

According to this Muslim thinker, knowledge by definition is not free of shortcomings. All aspects and qualities of a term are not revealed in a definition. There will always be unknown aspects of the entities defined that are not given in a definition. The human mind, therefore, will not be able to cognize the truth of an entity completely by definition. In order to surmount the shortcoming of knowledge by definition, Suhrawardi also talks about innate ideas. He insists that every kind of knowledge begins with a sort of knowledge about the object of inquiry. It is not possible to begin an investigation into the nature of an entity without having any idea about it at all. It is true that an inquiry begins with a conviction that we do not know enough about the object we inquire about. For this reason the inquiry is carried out. Meanwhile we do know something about it. Knowledge always begins with presuppositions and pre-given ideas; these presuppositions are not produced by previous experiences but are innate:

> Knowledge is either innate or not innate. When an unknown thing cannot be made known by pointing it out or bringing it to mind and it is something that cannot be attained by the true visions of the great sages, then knowledge of it must depend on things leading to it that are in an order and that are ultimately based on innate knowledge. Otherwise knowledge of anything that man desires to know will depend on previously obtaining an infinite number of things, and he will not even be able to obtain the first step in knowledge – which is absurd.[10]

In another argument, Suhrawardi states that the process of defining a term will continue *ad infinitum*, because if a term is defined by an attribute, that attribute needs to be defined by another attribute, and so on. In this case, nothing will be known, which is also absurd. There must be a first principle or a beginning against which our definition of a term and innate ideas can be measured.[11] The possibility of knowledge by definition stands on pre-given knowledge. Pre-given knowledge can be seen as *a priori* in the Kantian sense or as a condition that renders knowledge possible. The last and most reliable source of knowledge for Suhrawardi, after knowledge by sense-perception, definition and innate ideas, is intuition or knowledge by illumination (*al-ishraq*). Intuitive knowledge, like perception, is direct and non-representational. There is no mediation between the knower and the known. It is knowledge by 'presence' in which the distinction between the known and the knower is abolished. One object that is really grasped by intuition, as stated by Suhrawardi, is the 'self'. In self-knowledge, which is knowledge by illumination, the object (the self, which is known) is present in the self, which is the knower. Self-knowledge, like the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum*, goes beyond doubt and is undeniable. If I doubt, for example, the status of my existence, then I need to exist in order to experience the doubt about my own existence.

Intuitive knowledge is also not confined to the apprehension of the self. It is vital for knowing the intelligences or the inner reality of the world; it is a different way of knowing and does not require intermediate concepts. The intelligence (whether God's or the human mind) knows its object directly. Cognition is, therefore, not necessarily conceptual but the outcome of illuminative intuition, which requires the 'presence' of its object and direct apprehension of it.

Mulla Sadra's epistemology deals extensively with knowledge by intuition (*al-idrak*). This Arabic term has been translated as 'perception', but the term semantically means the act of comprehending, apprehending, attaining, grasping, and then finally perceiving in the sense of knowing something directly without mediation.[12] It is used to describe the process of directly apprehending and attaining the quiddity of objects outside the human mind in order to make it intelligible. It is a direct epistemological encounter with the external world through which the potentiality of knowing becomes actuality. This definition also includes sense-experience. For this reason, Mulla Sadra thinks of sense-perception as the first and the lowest modality of intuition (*al-idrak*). William Chittick and S. M. Khamenei (director of the Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute in Teheran) have translated *al-idrak* as perception.[13] Perception, then, rather than apprehension, is a unique cognitive power; due to various levels or degrees of intensity of existence cognition also has different modalities and cognitive stages. These stages of cognition in Mulla Sadra's theory of knowledge are in some ways similar to the hierarchy of knowledge in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, with the exception that Hegel's epistemology does not go beyond rational knowledge. According to Hegel, reason can be applied to solve the contradictions between the known and the knower, and in rational knowledge the truth for consciousness becomes consciousness itself.[14] To reach this form of cognition, it is essential for consciousness to move from sense-certainty to perception, and from there to understanding and finally to reason, which is the birthplace of absolute knowledge.[15]

For Mulla Sadra, attaining the highest stage of cognition for knowing the Truth does not rely on rationalistic discourse. It is the task of intellectual perception, a cognitive power that transcends the power of reason. How does Mulla Sadra arrive at this conviction? How does he deal with the unity of the known and the knower in his epistemology? When we understand Mulla Sadra's epistemology in the context of his metaphysics we realize that, in his view, knowledge deals mainly with the problem of the relationship between existence as an external reality outside the human mind and the transformation of external reality into mental existence, which is another form of Being.[16] In this way, his understanding of knowledge as the conceptualization of external reality for the sake of unity between the known and the knower is in agreement with Hegel's dialectic process of consciousness described in the

Phenomenology of Mind. It is also important to investigate the nature of this relationship between external and mental existence because it resolves the dichotomy of subject and object and the appropriation of the latter by the former. The transformation of external existence into mental existence is accomplished by conceptualizing the modalities of Being. But Being, unlike its modalities, cannot be known conceptually as it has no essence or universal determinations. Whatever is known through the revelation of universal determinations is a modality of Being. The human mind knows various modalities of Being, which are different in their degrees of perfection and proximity to Being. The possibility of knowing, whether acquired by our sense-experience or intellect, is based on the 'presence' of Being in one form or another. The reality of knowledge is inseparable from the reality of existence. The variety of levels of the modalities of Being is revealed to different levels of perception (*al-idrak*). Since there are three levels of existence there will be three levels of perception: sense-perception, imaginal perception and intellectual perception.[17]

In sense-perception, the human soul reflects upon the external object using five senses. Each of these senses is given a specific task and receives a particular form of the sensuous quality of the external object. This passive attitude of the human soul in sense-perception is followed by attention and awareness.[18] These two activities of the soul are interconnected and the former leads to the latter; unless we pay attention to sensuous quality such as sound we will not be aware of it. What is acquired by the five senses is at the same time a confirmation of the 'presence' of the external object for the soul. Awareness, which is the result of the presence of the object to the senses, is direct and necessary: direct because it does not require the conceptualization of its object and is not mediated by representations; necessary because sense-perception will not be able to receive its object unless the object is present. After receiving the sensuous qualities and being aware of the external object, the human soul endeavours to create the sensuous form of this object and to reveal its quiddity. Here, it seems that the passive act of receiving the sensuous qualities of an object is transformed into the activity of constructing the notion of the object by apprehending its quiddity. This stage, in Kant's epistemology, is in the domain of the faculty of understanding rather than sense-perception (sensibility). Understanding and not sense-perception is responsible for constructing the quiddity of a phenomenal object through the application of the subjective categories.[19] The question that arises here is whether the sensuous qualities of the known object exist externally. The answer, for Mulla Sadra, is in the negative. Sense organs are mere instruments and channels required for perception; otherwise it is the human soul not the sense organs that experiences sensation. The eyes do not see colour. They are only organs through which the soul becomes aware of the colour. They are sense organs for seeing but strictly speaking they see nothing, because seeing is perceiving and perception is a faculty of the human soul and not the sense

organ. If we think of the human body as an accidental fact, then the body plays its role in perception as an instrument; it is not intrinsic to this kind of knowledge. Mulla Sadra also believes that the human soul can still perceive if separated from the body without being assisted by sense organs. To return to the question, the sensuous qualities are neither in the senses nor present externally in the object. They are subjective forms and are displayed by the soul when an external object is presented to the sense organs. Empirical cognition is produced as the result of this relationship and the interaction between the subjective forms and the presence of the external object to the senses.[20] This view of Mulla Sadra is incompatible with the idea of perception as a passive acceptance of the qualities of an external and independent object. The human soul does not abstract the empirical determinations of an object but transforms the object into something mental. It imposes another form on it, which is pre-existent in the soul. The corporeal form of the object creates only an occasion for revealing the subjective forms that exist in the human soul.

What I understand from this account of perception by Mulla Sadra is that the human soul does not rely completely on the external object for empirical cognition. Rather, the external object stimulates the soul through the mediation of the sense organs to yield the cognized forms that transform the object into a new kind of being, a mental being, or a being that is known by the soul. If we think of cognition as the appropriation of the estranged object by the intelligence, then the material existence of the object cannot become the subject matter of cognition. In perception, the human soul experiences a form that belongs to the material object. This form has a mental character and is internal and subjective. For this reason, cognition is possible by distancing the intelligence from matter. Meanwhile, the cognitive form that becomes explicit at the time of presenting a material object to the senses is not the 'essence', as thought by Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophers and the *ishraqi* thinkers. It is another aspect of being that exists internally in the mind. Since the possibility of epistemology is grounded on ontology, whatever is perceived and known is nothing but another form of Being. In perception, the human soul transforms an object that exists externally (*al-wujud al 'aini*) into mental existence (*al-wujud al-dihni*) after this interaction between the intelligence and the external form of existence.

Although it is difficult to accept that sense-perception in Mulla Sadra's epistemology is mere passivity or acquisition, we can still state that imagination, unlike sense-perception, requires some skilful activity. The human soul creates its own images without relying on the external world to produce them. The power of imagination at the same time is not limited to the creation of these subjective images; it transcends the realm of subjectivity and attains the 'World of Images' (*'alam al'khayal*), which is held by thinkers such as Ibn 'Arabi and Suhrawardi to be a real world beyond the world of corporeal beings.[21] In this case, there will be two kinds of images: subjective images,

which are created by the power of imagination, and objective images, with their own ontological reality outside the human soul.

The human soul, after becoming aware of the form of the external object by sense-perception, is able to recall that form and reflect upon it by imagination (*takhayul*), even when the object is not present.[22] This power of imagination is conditioned by the sensuous forms, and relies on them. Not having the sense-perception of an object means not being able to imagine what it looks like. Mulla Sadra talks about another kind of imagination between sense-perception and intellectual perception. He calls it *tawahum* or *wahm*.[23] The literal meaning of this term in Arabic is 'illusion', 'delusion', 'fancy', 'misapprehension' or 'imagination'. But for Mulla Sadra, the philosophical meaning of this term is far from illusion or delusion. He uses it to designate the creative power of imagination in individuals. William Chittick translates this term as 'sense-intuition' and adds that the medieval scholars translated it as '*estimatio*'.[24] This type of imagination is for the apprehension of the intelligible universal forms without relying on a particular being. In this way, *tawahum* is more significant than *takhayul* for three reasons: first it is not conditioned by the objects of sense-perception; second, it is closer to the intellectual intuition as it apprehends the universal forms disjoined from the corporeal objects; and third, it is a creative power in the human soul.

Ibn Sina has also written on this cognitive tool before Mulla Sadra. He believes that *wahm* functioned as a faculty in the human mind and was mainly responsible for apprehending particular ideas in particular corporeal objects. The realization of love, for example, in a particular person, or being fearful in facing a particularly dangerous phenomenon, is the task of *wahm*. Mulla Sadra, however, says that Ibn Sina's form of realization is the function of reason attached to imagination. A person, for example, is afraid of an external threat because he/she reasons about it. Mulla Sadra's view was rejected by Sabzawari, one of the followers of the metaphysics of Mulla Sadra who remarks that, since animals become fearful in the face of danger, *wahm* should not be attached to reason, because animals do not have reason yet experience fear.

It is important to mention here that the idea of *tawahum* as a type of imagination was not originally Mulla Sadra's. Thinkers before him, such as Suhrawardi and Ibn 'Arabi, endorsed it in their epistemology. Each believed that imagination is an important faculty of the human mind for grasping the realm of ideas between the physical and intellectual worlds. As we see, and as also stated by Oliver Leaman, Mulla Sadra employed the technical language of Ibn 'Arabi in dealing with the problem of cognition. That language also influenced Mulla Sadra's understanding of the mystical implications of knowledge.[25] According to Ibn 'Arabi, imagination is in the domain of the human soul and a faculty between sense-perception and intellect.[26] The knowledge produced by imagination is of the *Barzakh* and the world of the

corporeal bodies through which spiritual entities manifest themselves.[27] The world of imagination is an intermediary realm between the corporeal and non-corporeal worlds. It is divided into unbounded or absolute imagination (*al-khayal al-mutlaq*) and bounded imagination (*al-khayal al-muqayyad*). In the unbounded abode of imagination between the being of God and nothingness, all beings come into existence. The bounded imagination is the creative power of individuals that functions as an intermediary power between the corporeal and the spiritual worlds.[28] The bounded imagination is further subdivided by Ibn 'Arabi into contiguous (*al-muttasil*) and discontinuous (*al-munfasil*). The former lies in the individual soul's production of images with the aid of perception, while the latter lies between the corporeal and spiritual worlds and has no relation to perception or images produced with the aid of perception. For Ibn 'Arabi, *Barzakh* is the world of creative imagination and he describes it as (*'alam al-mithal*), the ideal world, where all opposites become self-manifest.[29] This task of imagination, namely bringing the opposites together, is inherited from the creative nature of imagination. When two opposites meet, as in Hegel's dialectic, their synthesis, or the third element, emerges. The emergence of this new element takes place in the realm of *Barzakh*.[30] The world of imagination plays a significant role ontologically in the rise of new entities in the corporeal world. Mulla Sadra himself is aware of the influence of Ibn 'Arabi on his theory of knowledge and discusses the views of his predecessors in detail in *al-Asfar*. But, unlike Suhrawardi or Ibn 'Arabi, he does not think of the world of imagination as something ontological that exists independent of the human mind. It is subjective and is created by the mind, but when the created ideas of imagination are externalized, for example in works of art, they become objective realities.

Moving away from the realm of sense-perception is not a venture into the realm of abstraction. It is an endeavour towards grasping the higher levels of existence until the human mind is able to attain utmost proximity to Being.[31] With intellectual intuition, another source of knowledge, the human mind tries to realize its spiritual ambition. At this stage, epistemology becomes a vehicle for the human mind to obtain its ultimate goal by moving away from the philosophical and scientific boundaries of cognition to the mystical and theosophical. This shift is determined by trans-substantial changes in the world and in the human soul. The aim of epistemology is, then, not cognition or understanding of external reality, but, as in Plato, the transformation and elevation of the human soul from a lower rank of existence to a higher where it can unite with the Active Intellect. The position of seeker of knowledge at this level of being resembles the position of the freed prisoner in the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*. It is liberation of the human soul from the bondage of shadows and material existence, that is, from a less perfect level of existence. When the freed prisoner sees the light of the sun and arrives at a

higher level of existence, he or she does not reject other faculties of knowledge such as perception and imagination. The freed person is perfected and substantially changed from a lower to a higher level of existence. Hence the journey through trans-substantial change means that the soul is changed through acquiring knowledge and has become a better (higher-rank) human being.

In intellectual intuition, the human intelligence becomes aware of the transcendent forms that exist ontologically in a Platonic sense. These transcendent forms, however, are not universals; each is seen as an individual, non-corporeal being. The forms also unite and become identical with the intelligence when they are grasped by intellectual intuition. This awareness of the non-corporeal forms and their unity with the intelligence is determined by the spiritual station of the human soul. The intelligence is unable to apprehend these forms unless it moves away from obsession with the material world. This epistemological development is also a dynamic process based on the dynamic nature of its object. Since everything in the world is in constant substantial change, the knower and the known never remain the same. Also, the nature of the reality of being and of trans-substantial change cannot be grasped fully by rationalistic discourse, or by representation. The rationalistic discourse is incapable of understanding the true nature of reality. This view is similar to that of Henri Bergson in his understanding of reality and 'duration'. In making a clear distinction between analytic or scientific knowledge and metaphysical knowledge, Bergson concludes that 'duration' as a restless continuity in the evolutionary process of life, and consciousness can be attained by intuition. In intuition, consciousness comes in direct contact with reality without being mediated by representations. This kind of knowledge, which is not representational or translated into concepts, is absolute and perfect in comparison with knowledge by representations or scientific knowledge.[32]

The realm of intellectual intuition contains the transcendent Platonic Forms. It is also the realm of the Active Intellect. The human intelligence becomes one with the forms through its union with the Active Intellect. This union between the Active Intellect and multiple individual souls does not affect the simplicity in the nature of the former. The Active Intellect and its knowledge of the realm of the Platonic Forms remain simple and identical, because this rank of being is perfect and remote from the abode of multiplicity and the influence of trans-substantial change.

Knowledge by presence has characteristics of its own that distinguish it from knowledge by representation. It is direct and unmediated by concepts, and indubitable. Since it is neither representational nor non-propositional, it is neither false nor true. Its truth is beyond empirical verification and assertion in propositions. Furthermore, in knowledge by presence the distinction between intelligent and intelligible disappears. The knower and the known

object unite as one being. Finally, this type of knowledge is beyond the domain of demonstration by reason. The intellectual intuition as the source of knowledge by presence becomes a mystical tool of cognition (*al-kashif*), or in the Bergsonian sense it becomes the fountainhead of metaphysical knowledge beyond the reach of scientific analysis.

Mulla Sadra deals with 'knowledge by presence' and intellectual intuition in another work, *Se Asl* ('Three Principles'), written in Persian. He explains in this work that there are three hindrances in the human mind to obtaining knowledge by presence and experiencing intellectual intuition. These hindrances are not related to the nature of knowledge obtained and verified by the human soul. They are simply conditions influencing the soul and become impediments to the spiritual progress of the individual. These hindrances are the non-realization of the inner nature of the self on the part of individuals, seeking lust and wealth, and the temptation of the commanding self to pursue evil as excellence and excellence as evil.[33] These three principles, which are not epistemological and are not in the quality of knowledge obtained, are necessary conditions of the spiritual path of of the human soul towards the realization of Truth.

Generally speaking, intellectual initiation is successful when the individual soul realizes its own reality and knows itself as a spiritual entity rather than a material body. This is the first station of the spiritual guidance for attaining the Truth by gnosis (*'irfan*) or knowledge by presence. The second hindrance is inherited from the relationship between the soul and the material world. This relationship becomes a hindrance when the soul is attracted towards entertaining the body and seeking lust and material possessions. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, who adheres to the existentialist school of Mulla Sadra, believes that lust and material interest conceal the love and passion for divine beauty and perfection. This love manifests itself in the heart of the seeker of the Truth only through regular and persistent self-control (*muraqabah*) and the renunciation of desire for the material world.[34] It is worth mentioning that Mulla Sadra's advocacy of intellectual intuition and knowledge by presence is not the negation of knowledge by representation and demonstration. In his epistemology, all sources of knowledge have their own function and participate in unveiling the truth of Being. His position, like Hegel's in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, is to accommodate various cognitive sources at different levels of the revelation of Being because the gradations of Being are known by different cognitive tools. Yet it is intellectual intuition not reason that is able to grasp reality fully and directly. Science, philosophy and theosophy (*hikmah*) are interconnected in the sense that they are ontologically conditioned by the presence of Being, and each deals with one aspect of Being, with the exception of theosophy, which relies on intellectual intuition to attain the truth of Being.[35] This antagonism with the rationalist philosophers in respect of demonstrative knowledge is grounded mainly on the

intrinsic limitation of discursive knowledge for understanding the meaning of Being directly. Mulla Sadra, under the sway of Sufism in general and the *ishraqi* epistemology (Illuminationism) in particular, does not allow this limitation to curtail the endeavour of the human mind to 'un-conceal' Being. By insisting on knowledge by presence, Mulla Sadra transcends the limitation of reason and the boundaries of discursive knowledge. The unlimited power of intellectual intuition compensates for that constraint and goes beyond the power of reason.

Another important point to be mentioned here is the union of the intelligent (*al-'aqil*) and the intelligible (*al-ma'qul*). In the history of Muslim philosophy this epistemological matter is also discussed by Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers such as Ibn Sina. The truth of the external reality for Ibn Sina and other Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers was based on correspondence between the external object and its representation in the mind. Although this idea is ascribed to Aristotle, it is difficult to claim that Aristotle made a clear distinction between intelligent and intelligible at all levels of cognition in his epistemology. In *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*, Aristotle refers to the incorporeal intelligible substances as intelligibles that unite with their intellect.[36] This Aristotelian notion of unity was later expressed by Alexander of Aphrodisia (active *c.* 200 AD) in *De Intellectu* and by Porphyry (*c.* 232–304) as the unity of the intelligible with the intelligent. Mulla Sadra also discusses the ideas of these thinkers in *al-Asfar* when he argues against the Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers.[37] Ibn Sina considers this unity a poetical nonsense and meaningless.[38] However, in *Al-Mabda' wal-ma'ad*, particularly in the discussion on the nature of knowledge of the Necessary Being, Ibn Sina, like Aristotle, holds the view that in the Necessary Being intelligent and intelligible are one and united.[39] In criticizing Ibn Sina's position, Mulla Sadra claims that Ibn Sina was under the sway of Aristotle's cosmology. He does not accept the emergence of a new element resulting from a unity at the expense of terminating the two opposing elements.[40] Mulla Sadra also discusses this problem in *Risala fi Ittihad al-'aaqil wal-ma'qul* ('Treatise on the Unity of the Intelligent and the Intelligible').[41] How does Mulla Sadra solve this epistemological problem? On what ground does he demonstrate the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible? Mulla Sadra's solution can be divided into two parts. The first is based on his ontological system of the primacy of Being and the understanding of the meaning of Being as the principle of unity beneath the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. The second part is an exposition argued from correlativity or correlation.

I will begin with the argument based on the doctrine of the primacy of Being and explain how the intelligent and the intelligible become one ontologically. It is apparent, and we may agree with Ibn Sina in his criticism of this unity, that it is not possible for two different things to unite but that there can be a connection between them. Mulla Sadra's ontology makes it clear that

the different elements are all bound together by their inner reality. Difference is only one aspect of reality; there is a unity beneath this interconnection. All elements are gradations of Being; they are only different in their intensity of perfection due to their distance and proximity to Being. There is neither being for itself, nor is there anything that can stand by itself alone. All beings including intelligence are taken as real on the ground of the reality of Being as their ontological foundation. What appears for intelligence as intelligible is at the same time nothing other than a modality of Being as the ontological foundation. The intelligent and the intelligible might be conceived as two different things phenomenologically, but, ontologically, they are the same in existing.[42] As Fazlur Rahman says, the external world is not a different reality that contains entities distinct from mental existents; it

> merely denotes a status or level of existence, i.e., a level where things operate with their natural properties. When, again, something is said to be 'in the mind', the mind cannot in this use be conceived of as a 'container', but it simply means that the mind has a set of properties or essences, which is able to apply to the external reality and to classify things.[43]

The outcome of this view is that truth does not reside in the object known externally, but is defined in terms of its being known internally. This epistemological interpretation of the mental existents is reminiscent of Kant's analysis of the application of the table of the categories in the faculty of understanding. The categories also exist in the mind and their application renders knowledge of the external world possible. Mulla Sadra also tried to establish the unity between the intelligent and the intelligible by focusing on the point that these two elements are not substantially dissimilar. They both belong to the reality of Being. In order to elucidate this point it is helpful to mention Hegel's view of cognition as a process of conceptualization or idealization of the external object by consciousness in which consciousnesses transforms the object into something mental which then becomes the property of consciousness and unites with it. The external object, after being conceptualized, no longer posits itself as something external and different.[44] The experience that consciousness undergoes brings consciousness to know itself through knowing its object. The object known to consciousness is thus another aspect of consciousness. It is posited and developed by consciousness. Cognition, which is always relational under the transformation of the known object, becomes consciousness of consciousness or self-consciousness. In self-consciousness all distinctions between consciousness and its external object disappear and the object is reduced to mere concepts and hence is inseparable from consciousness. The difference between Hegel's view and that of Mulla Sadra is that Mulla Sadra does not intend to transform the object into mere concepts, nor does he deny its external reality of it. He insists on this unity through his understanding of the doctrine of the primacy

of Being, a significant ontological doctrine that considers intelligent and intelligible to be two sides of the same coin. Therefore, there is no distinction between intelligent and intelligible and between mental and external existents, as both belong to Being.

In the second part of his argument, Mulla Sadra proves the truth of this unity by arguing from correlativity. He demonstrates that there is an inherent correlation between the intelligent and the intelligible. By this he means that their joint occurrence is not accidental but is essentially connected. This correlation, like that between cause and effect, is necessary and undeniable. Whenever there is a cause, that cause has an effect, and an effect is always produced by a cause. Likewise, the 'existence' of the intelligible is possible through the 'existence' of the intelligent.[45] To explain this correlativity, Mulla Sadra makes a distinction between two kinds of intelligible: the first kind is accidental and dependent on the material existence of the object; the second is essential and does not depend on the material existence of the object. It is a separate intellectual form that relies on the mind. The essential intelligible, which is at the same time the actuality of a being, is inseparable from the intelligent.[46] In this case the intelligent, in intellectualizing the intelligible, intellectualizes itself, and their complete unity is established as they depend on each other to exist.

Another important philosophical issue discussed by Mulla Sadra within the problem of knowledge is God's knowledge of particulars. Generally speaking, there are two opposing views in Islamic thought on understanding God's knowledge of particulars: philosophical and religious. The religious viewpoint, which is not the subject of our discussion here, relies on the authority of the foundation text of Islam, the Qur'an, and asserts God's knowledge of the infinite number of particular beings created by Him. Muslim philosophers have put forward different views on this. Some reject it and others assert God's knowledge of Himself as well as of the world. The Peripatetic Neoplatonist Muslim philosophers, in particular Ibn Sina, held the view that God's knowledge is not derived from the external objects outside His mind; otherwise His knowledge would be conditioned by and dependent on them. To Ibn Sina, God's mind should be creative rather than receptive, active and not passive. He also states that God knows particulars not as particulars but in a universal way. Other thinkers identified God's knowledge with Platonic Forms and discussed the relationship of these Forms with the essence of God. The problem which arises here is that of the nature of God's knowledge and the way He knows the world. Is God's knowledge dependent on the world? Is it prior to the creation of the world? Or, more specifically, should we ask how God knows the world?

In Ibn Sina's ontology God is the Necessary Being and identical with His essence. From the Necessary Being emanates the first intellect alone, because the Necessary Being is absolutely simple. Only one thing emanates from its

existence. The first intellect, which is the first possible existence and is actualized by the Necessary Being, is no longer absolutely simple. It has a dual nature and gives rise to two entities: the second intellect and the highest sphere. This dual process of emanation continues until the tenth intellect and the sublunary world are emanated. The Necessary Being remains absolutely simple and aloof from the domain of multiplicity. But how does the Necessary Being know the world of multiplicity without having multiplicity in its essence? Before answering this question it is worth mentioning that for Ibn Sina God knows Himself as well as the world, because He is the originator of the world, but His knowing of the world is different from the way human beings come to learn about external objects and is at the same time unique. For example, Ibn Sina says:

> It is necessary to know first that the knowledge (*'ilm*) of the Necessary Being is not like our knowledge nor is it analogous (*qiyas*) to our knowledge. The first [kind of knowledge] requires multiplicity, and the second does not. That which requires multiplicity is called 'psychological' knowledge and that which does not require [it] is called 'intellectual' knowledge.[47]

The uniqueness of the Necessary Being's knowledge is due to the ontological status enjoyed by this being. Its being is unlike the being of the ontic beings in the world: it is absolutely simple and disjoined from matter. For this reason, God's knowledge also does not happen in time (history) and is not related to the changeable world.[48] Time, multiplicity and change belong to the sublunary world and not to the realm of the Necessary Being. Accordingly, the knowledge possessed by the Necessary Being does not change because it neither happened in time nor is empirical:

> It cannot be that the knowledge (*'ilm*) of the Necessary Being happens within time, so that it could sat that now it is so and tomorrow it is not so, and [so that] its judgment is according to how It exists today and It will be tomorrow, and then afterwards how It is tomorrow [and] It is not [any longer] today.[49]

In contrast to the human way of obtaining knowledge, the Necessary Being becomes aware of the particulars not empirically by perception but in a universal way. He knows, for example, that there is war in the world and knows all the antecedents and consequences of war. He knows that wars will happen and how to differentiate war from peace or distinguish war by conventional weapons from war by non-conventional weapons; but where and when a particular war will occur is not known to the Necessary Being, because this happens in a particular space and at a specific time in the human history.

Those who affirm God's knowledge of particulars argue that God's knowledge is either identical with His essence or separate. The first view was advocated by the Mu'tazilites, a group of Muslim rationalist theologians in

Basrah and Baghdad.[50] They claimed that there was a new relationship between the essence of God and the divine attributes by saying that God neither possessed the attributes nor were they in His essence, but the divine essence and the attributes were identical and the same. For example, God's knowledge is eternal and not something other than God; otherwise knowledge becomes another independent eternal being. First, in the sense of numerical unity or absolute unity, this denies the existence of more than one God, or polytheism. This meaning of unity (*al-tawhid*) is in agreement with the Qur'anic notion of monotheism. Second, it is used in the sense of internal unity and simplicity, meaning that God's essence is free from essential plurality and composition.

If we go back to the history of Judeo-Christian theology, we find that the argument for the unity of God was propounded by Judaeus Philo (20 BCE–40 CE) and restated by Spinoza (1632–1677) in his pantheistic philosophy. For Philo, eternity is an essential quality of God; no other being but He can be eternal. This view represents the established Judeo-Christian and Islamic principle of monotheism. Its denial constitutes the rejection of monotheism in these three Semitic religions.

Spinoza espouses the Philonic principle by putting the argument into another logical form, saying that if there are two substances such as incorporeal God and the corporeal world, they should be absolutely different or absolutely the same. If there were two substances having nothing in common and being absolutely different, one could not become the 'cause' of the other. If the existence of two different substances is not logically possible, then we must consider the case of the existence of two similar substances which are absolutely alike. Such substances cannot be distinct, that is two, unless, in addition to their common qualities, they possess some other quality in which they differ. As Spinoza concludes, 'Two substances would be granted as having the same attribute, which is absurd.'[51]

The Mu'tazilites also claimed that 'essences' are known by God in the state of their 'subsistence', in the state of non-existence, or before coming into the realm of existence. Ibn 'Arabi shares this view and argues that the essences were in God's mind prior to their actual existence in the real world. Some Muslim thinkers also identified God's knowledge with the Platonic Forms, which were considered separate from God with their own ontological reality. This approach, which was taken by some Sufis, was in agreement with the Hanbali School, the followers of which argued for the reality and eternity of the divine attributes. Knowledge as one of the attributes was considered both non-identical with the divine essence and eternal.[52] Suhrawardi had a different idea. He insisted that God's knowledge was separate and its objects included all things emanated from Him. The emanated objects are multiple and under the sway of change, but God's knowledge is not.[53] Suhrawadi also thinks of God's knowledge of the world in the context that God is perfect and the knowledge of His perfection cannot be denied.

In Mulla Sadra's ontology, essences belong to the realm of the contingent beings, which are finite. By contrast, God is pure Being and the finite attributes of the contingent beings or essences cannot be ascribed to Him. Here, Mulla Sadra distances himself from the views of the Mu'tazilites and Ibn 'Arabi. His criticism of those who think of God's knowledge as a Platonic Form is based on two points. First, he states that if knowledge is separate from God and is not something in the mind of God, it is essential to find out how God knows this separate and distant form. Second, the Platonic Forms are posterior to God's existence, so how can we say that God's knowledge, which is identical to the Platonic Forms, is eternal? Also, if God's knowledge is a separate form, *a priori* knowledge is required for knowing that form, which will become an endless process.[54]

Mulla Sadra's main confrontation on God's knowledge of the particulars is with Ibn Sina. While he agrees with him that knowledge does not affect God's simplicity, he is critical of Ibn Sina's indifference towards the union of the intelligent (*al-'aaqil*) and the intelligible (*al-ma'qul*). According to Mulla Sadra, on the ground of this union it is possible to conclude that Being is the only reality and that knowledge is derived from Being. Since Being produces a systematic ambiguity of gradation or its own modalities, knowledge should be seen in this way. Another difference between Mulla Sadra and Ibn Sina is on God's knowledge as 'accident', in which God's knowledge is described as *a posteriori*, conditioned by and dependent on the objects known outside God's mind. Hence the mind of God remains receptive rather than creative.[55] Against this, Mulla Sadra developed three arguments. In the first argument, he maintains that knowledge, as one of the divine attributes, can be neither mental nor non-existential. To prove this point, Mulla Sadra classifies the attributes into three types. The first two are subjective, existing only in the mind, and existential, meaning ontological, and attributes as properties of their accidents' 'essences'. For him, it is impossible to think of the divine attributes as subjective or mere properties of the mind. The third type of attributes become existential reality when the essences emerge in the world or come into existence with the ontic beings. As a consequence of this, knowledge as one of the divine attributes cannot be described as something mental. Therefore, it must be an existential reality.[56]

The second argument deals with the principle that obtaining perfect knowledge of an effect is acquired only through its cause. This principle appears to be self-contradictory, because it does not mean that the effect is known only through knowing its cause. In thinking of the primordialness of Being in Mulla Sadra's ontology, we should insist that this principle stand on the ground of 'existential' cause and 'existential' effect. The proposition 'Whenever there is *p*, then there will be *q*' should be modified into 'This is *p*, hence there is *q*'. The second is an existential proposition, and an indication of existential *q*, which is directly caused by *p*. Hence the forms, which are

caused by God's mind, are directly known by Him as existential realities rather than *a posteriori* concepts.[57] In the third argument, Mulla Sadra, in rejecting the idea of God's knowledge as mental or subjective, disagrees that something at a lower rank of existence can become the source and the cause of an entity at a higher rank of existence. Since God's knowledge is the cause of the contingent world, it is not mental but a real existence. Otherwise, God's knowledge as the cause of the contingent world will stay at a lower rank of existence and the contingent world at a higher.[58]

Having critically evaluated the views of his predecessors, Mulla Sadra relies on his own ontological understanding of reality to solve this problem. As is mentioned in Chapter Four, Being is the primordial reality on which the multiplicity of the contingent world stands. But Being itself, as the reality of all things, is simple: what is real in everything is its being rather than its essence. Being is, in this sense, equivocal and not univocal. It is the reality and a common ground of all things or the Being of them, but with different intensity and weakness. The Being of a thing and a thing are not two different realities, but one and the same. The reality of Being is, therefore, objective or an ontological reality of all things. The multiplicity of the contingent world does not affect the simple nature of Being. The principle of unity for them as well as their diversity is something grounded on the unified ground because nothing grounded exists without its own ground. This understanding of Being and its relationship with the contingent world of beings helps us to understand God's cognitive relationship with multiplicity. All things are present in God's simple being. When God thinks about Himself and this self-knowledge does not involve duality of the intellect and the intelligible, God comes to know about everything, including all particulars, without suffering multiplicity.[59] Although Being or God is the cause of multiplicity and all contingent beings are modalities of the systematic ambiguity of Being, Being is not affected by them. God's knowledge of particulars or His modalities is nothing more than self-knowledge; this does not infect the simplicity and infinity of His existence with multiplicity and finitude. God, which is pure Being for Mulla Sadra, has no essence, but His being is inclusive of all forms and knows them in an order as His affects. He knows all of them simply by contemplating Himself. The self-knowledge of God passes through three stages. In the first stage, God realizes His own absolute unity. In the second, various attributes become manifest in His knowledge, but since all of them belong to the same source they have an underlying unity. Finally, at the third stage, God's knowledge gives rise to the Platonic Forms in the non-corporeal world. Here every Platonic Form stands by itself as a unique form; for this reason it is called the stage of distinction.[60] At this stage the contingent modalities of Being such as different corporeal entities come into existence. As a consequence of this, the self-knowledge of God is the knowledge of the world, because the world is the self-manifestation of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In Conclusion

The significance of Mulla Sadra's philosophy should not be seen in the light of its role in the continuity of the intellectual and philosophical tradition in the Muslim world. Its task was not to replicate what was produced before; instead, it represented a break with the philosophical tradition and the emergence of a new philosophical system based on a new ontology. This new development was antagonistic to the dominant philosophical thought of its time and stood against the 'essentialist' intellectual persuasion of the school of Illuminationism of Suhrawardi.

From the very beginning of this book it was argued that Mulla Sadra's philosophical 'turn' or shift from the philosophical position of the primacy of essence to the primacy of Being and to thinking of Being as the primordial metaphysical reality is similar to the ontological enterprise of *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger. To elucidate this claim I have tried, first, to suggest a commonality of philosophical tradition against which Mulla Sadra and Heidegger communicate their discontent. Second, the similarities between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of Heidegger are explained in the stream of thought in this work where the need for comparison arises.

Similarities between the ontological enterprises of these two thinkers are discussed mainly on the grounds that Mulla Sadra and Heidegger advocated the primordialness of Being and held the view that Aristotle's logic was incapable of revealing the meaning of Being. Both thinkers also argued against Plato's metaphysics as a foundation of the philosophical tradition on which the essentialism of Suhrawardi and the nihilism of Western thought relied.

Mulla Sadra's new ontological system begins with the primordialness of Being. Unlike Suhrawardi, who thought that 'essences' were real, Mulla Sadra argued for the primacy of Being. This shift from the primacy of essence to the primacy of Being is described as a 'turn' from the core elements of Suhrawardi's metaphysics towards a contrary ontological view. The essentialism of Suhrawardi, according to Mulla Sadra in *al-Masha'ir*, led to the 'darkness of illusion' and neglected the fundamental philosophical questions concerning the meaning of Being in favour of investigating the nature of something less fundamental. It sacrificed the ground for the grounded.

Mulla Sadra's description of the dominant metaphysical tradition of his time as the 'darkness of illusion' is reminiscent of Heidegger's notion of the 'abandonment of Being' or the 'concealment of the truth' in his understanding of the Platonic and the post-Platonic traditions in the West. Both philosophical traditions (Illuminationism and Platonism) abandoned or shrouded

in darkness the Being of beings as the inner reality and the ground on which all beings stand. This led to the oblivion of Being and to the thinking of Being as 'essence'. In Heidegger's view, the oblivion of Being is a process in which the truth of Being is concealed; as described by Mulla Sadra it is the state of untruth or'darkness of illusion'. Suhrawardi's metaphysics is, therefore, like that of Plato, in that it represents 'nihilism' or the thinking of Being as nothing or un-real. Overcoming the 'darkness of illusion' or 'nihilism' is possible only through turning to Being as the sole fundamental metaphysical reality. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger describes this turning as another beginning, a new epoch, and a transition from the withdrawal of Being to its re-emergence behind the appearance of beings. In insisting on similarities between Mulla Sadra's and Heidegger's metaphysics I do not intend to neglect their differences. It is clear that Mulla Sadra describes Being as a conscious transcendent reality that has a purpose in manifesting itself. It is the first principle beyond the gradations of its own modalities. For this reason, Mulla Sadra's metaphysics, unlike that of Heidegger, should be seen as an onto-theological system with a metaphysical objective and a realized end.

In his critical evaluation of essentialism or the illuminative philosophy of Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra examines three ontological positions: Being is prior to essence, posterior to it, or Being and essence co-exist simultaneously. Thinking of Being as prior to essence signifies that Being can stand by itself without its essence. This ontological position at the rank of Pure Being is accepted because Pure Being is without essence; but a problem arises if we think of essence as prior to being, or conversely of being as posterior to essence. If the primacy of essence is accepted by Mulla Sadra as true, it implies that essence exists without Being. But for this, essence has to exist or needs another being to rely on, which leads to a vicious regress. The third position is that existence and essence co-exist simultaneously. This ontological view involves the notion that essence is in existence. In this case, essence again needs another existence to rely on for its existence. As a consequence of this, essence cannot be without prior existence.

Mulla Sadra concludes that the qualification of essence by existence is an intellectual operation. Neither existence nor essence is prior to the other, nor do they have a state of simultaneity, since nothing can be prior, posterior or simultaneous to itself. Both are ontologically inseparable in the ranks below the rank of Pure Being and are different only in thinking when the human mind apprehends an ontic being.

What, then, does the primacy of Being mean if these three positions are refuted? How can we talk about the primacy of Being? In my opinion Mulla Sadra's argument against the second and the third ontological positions should be understood with reference to the existence of the ontic beings. There is no doubt that Pure Being is without essence and we cannot talk about the priority or posteriority of its essence. Mulla Sadra believes that Being and

essence, like the ground and the grounded, are ontologically inseparable, and are different realities in the ontological region of becoming only in thinking and for thinking. When a being is conceived and analysed into its determinations, the Being of this being appears in thinking to be distinct from these determinations. This intellectual apprehension does not coincide with the inner reality of Being, because essence is not distinct from an ontic entity, nor is existence an addition to essence. It is only in thinking that the priority of one over the other, in particular of essence, becomes evident, because thinking analyses each entity into existence and essence. Essence appears as the prior factor due to its nature as a universal determination apprehended by the intellect, whereas existence is not apprehended. Here, the primacy of essence becomes a mental factor, and Being remains as an ontological ground inaccessible to rational thinking. Mulla Sadra elucidates the distinction between Being and beings in a number of ways: as the division of Being into unity and multiplicity (modalities), as necessary and contingent; and then as independent and dependent (connective). In these divisions, multiplicity, contingent and dependent are understood in their relationship with Being, which stands as their unity or necessary and independent reality. For example, multiplicity is possible only on the ground of unity, because the beings are nothing more than the self-manifestation of a single, simple reality in its own modalities. Whatever exists and the human intellect becomes aware of in intellectual experience, including the 'self', is nothing but a modality of Being.

The distinction between beings (phenomena) and their essences arises when beings are analysed intellectually into categorical determinations. In the world external to the intellect, these beings are not separable from their essences. The case with Being is completely distinct, because Being (or *Sein* in the Heideggerian sense) is Pure Being and has no universal determinations. This description of Being as a reality without universal determinations retains Being beyond the domain of Aristotle's logic and rationalistic apprehension. All beings are grounded on Being and are known by it, but at the same time Being cannot be defined. Being, then, is the ontological as well as epistemological precondition for the world and our cognizance of beings, but the logical definition of genus and specific difference is not applicable to it. In this traditional way (by relying on Aristotelian rule for definition), Being is indefinable.

Another important point is the systematic ambiguity of the gradation of Being (*tashkik al-wujud*). In this process, Being manifests itself vertically as well as horizontally. It begins with the most perfect rank of Being to the least perfect, such as prime matter. The other direction of *tashkik* determines the transformation of the world horizontally through successive and infinite forms. This is analogous to the gradation of light in Suhrawardi's metaphysics, but for Mulla Sadra it is Being rather than light (essence) that creates

its own modalities. Being is viewed as equivocal and not univocal. This is a common characteristic of all things or the Being of beings, but it differs in its intensity and weakness. The Being of a thing and a thing are not two different realities but one thing and the same at the same time. Being is a single reality but with ranks and grades of its own modalities. All beings are but ontic *coagula* of a single ontological reality. This reality should not be understood as this or that being but as the Being of beings and something transcendent and grasped intuitively.

I have interpreted Mulla Sadra's concept of the 'transcendence' of Being in two ways: ontologically and epistemologically. Ontologically, Being is the Being of all beings and their source. All things emanate from Being. The relationship between Being and beings in terms of the doctrine of emanation is that Being, as the fountainhead of all emanated beings, is not immanent but a reality that transcends them. Epistemologically, Being can be seen as a precondition for our knowledge of the world as well as our own existence, because it is a reality on which the existence of all beings relies. Our experience and knowledge of beings is possible only by virtue of their 'Being', and Being at the same time is beyond the domain of perception and rationalistic discourse. It is neither this nor that being of our experience but something transcendent.

Mulla Sadra's ontology, in particular the doctrine of systematic ambiguity of Being, as analysed in Chapter Five, bridges the gulf between unity and multiplicity. This bridging is realized on the ground of the principle of identity in difference or unity in diversity. Being as a unity and identity contains the multiplicity of its own modification. The external world is characterized by unity and diversity. Diversity is a mode of the single and simple reality of Being that exists only on the ground of unity.

The systematic ambiguity of Being is an increase and decrease in the intensity of existence. For this reason, I conclude that it is not a change in the 'essence' of a being but an existential movement in the core of its existence. The qualitative and quantitative change in a being is not seen as a gradual intensification of a particular quality, i.e., whiteness, but rather a replacement of a former quality by a new one. This is also the case with a definite quantity of an ontic being: a new quantity replaces the old quantity. As a result, the world is in constant change and Being is in a pattern of renewal and evolution until it reaches its own culmination where no further change is thinkable. What undergoes change and at the same time endures in this evolutionary process of the world is Being. All changes occur in Being and by Being, which is called trans-substantial change. This doctrine is the keystone of Mulla Sadra's ontology and the ground for developing other aspects of his philosophy. It is the ground for our understanding of the world and of human knowledge. Being is, then, in a self-evolutionary process and it is the only cause that determines this process. Nor does Mulla Sadra see this existential

movement of the world as blind or capricious. It has a purpose and a realized end. The inner motive for accomplishing this task is a mystic force of love (*'ishq*), present in all beings and causing the lower-ranked beings to long for beings of the higher ranks of existence to obtain perfection. The vertical direction, in contrast to the horizontal direction of the systematic ambiguity of Being, is one from potentiality to actuality for the sake of perfection. It finally reaches its goal in human existence with the rise of the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), who apprehends the divine realm and attains unity with the Intelligences or divine attributes. I also argue that the vertical direction of this movement is similar to the dialectical movement in Hegel's philosophy and to the idea of creative evolution in Bergson's thought.

I have also mentioned that the concept of trans-substantial change has religious as well as philosophical consequences. It can change our understanding of the notions of resurrection and divine retribution and initiate discussion on the transmigration of the soul. All these notions deal with the identity of the human existence that undergoes trans-substantial change. On one hand, Mulla Sadra believes that the identity of the self depends on the intellectual form of a person, which exists in the mind of God. On the other hand, he states that the self will survive throughout the evolutionary changes, which will help the self to retain its own identity. This position is, however, similar to that taken by Descartes in developing his theory of self-substance in the second and third meditations and is in contradiction with Mulla Sadra's doctrine of trans-substantial change.

The philosophical consequences of trans-substantial change are summarized in three points: the temporal contingency of the world, the infection of being by non-being or nothingness, and the relativity of truth and values. Trans-substantial change is an indication of the non-being of beings that have not yet come into existence. Every being is preceded by its own non-being. The passage of being into non-being and non-being into being is 'becoming'. Based on this understanding of the reality of beings, two new regions of being and becoming arise. The region of becoming is the result of the passage of non-being into being and vice versa. It is also argued that Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the relationship between being and nothingness is closer to Sartre's than Hegel's. Mulla Sadra and Sartre agree that nothingness is in the world due to the existence of the ontic beings, but for Sartre, more specifically, the ontic being means the human consciousness. Mulla Sadra insists that all contingent beings, including the human consciousness, are preceded by their own non-existence in the world. In the region of becoming, where the evolutionary process rules and changes in substance as well as accidents take place, there is no room for deterioration or corruption. All beings strive to move upwards from a lower to a higher rank of existence. Change, as we have discussed, in Mulla Sadra's ontology is evolution and an irreversible progress.

Another philosophical consequence of this doctrine that can have a significant impact on the intellectual development in the Muslim world is that trans-substantial change leads to the relativity of truth and values. The application of this doctrine deconstructs the metaphysical foundation of universal truth and values. Relying on this doctrine for understanding the structure of the world means that nothing can be considered eternal or stable. Everything is in constant change, including human society and our understanding of reality. A consequence of this is that no system of belief can claim absoluteness and finality for itself because novelty prevails. This consequence also had a profound impact on Mulla Sadra's understanding of politics, in particular political Islam, which proclaims divinity and universality in its discourse. Mulla Sadra makes a vivid distinction between religion and politics and between religious laws and political laws, and rejects the identification of the former with the latter. I have also attempted to explain that trans-substantial change encompasses both nature and history. Ontology and social systems are necessarily interconnected. It is hard to understand Mulla Sadra's political and social philosophy without understanding his metaphysics. For him, metaphysics is the foundation of history and nature.

Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the world is an innovative philosophical project and a clear departure from Illuminationsim. It involves the development of a new intellectual discourse in the Muslim world that might have a strong influence on Islamic socio-political and theological theories, conceptual frameworks and values. The task of philosophy, for Mulla Sadra, is initially an active interpretation of the world and the realization of substantial change in all beings. This realization also leads to an antagonistic stand vis-à-vis tradition and leaps towards future possibilities in the vertical movement of evolution.

In Chapter Six, I explained Mulla Sadra's analysis of human knowledge, the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible, and God's knowledge of the world. Although Mulla Sadra's metaphysics is characterized by strong opposition to Illuminationism, his understanding of the human knowledge of the world was greatly influenced by Suhrawardi's theory of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Mulla Sadra departs from Suhrawardi in believing that anything that is in reality is a 'being' (Suhrawardi called it 'essence'). Without being, it is impossible to think of knowing.

Mulla Sadra, like Suhrawardi, advocates the priority of knowledge by 'presence' rather than 'representation'. Knowledge by presence has the advantage of apprehending the known object directly without mediation by concepts. The human intellect does not only know the object, it also experiences it. Knowledge by presence in Mulla Sadra's epistemology is neither subjective nor objective. It is the product of the application of some innate cognitive forms and the presence of the objects apprehended by perception. The gradation of being is seen at different ranks and levels of perfection

(*al-idrak*), and this conditions human knowledge. Accordingly there are different stages and kinds of knowledge. Also, since whatever is known is 'being' and being undergoes change, our knowledge of the world is also in constant change and is always both relational and temporal, with the exception of the objects of intellectual perception such as the divine attributes, which are perfect and remain the same.

The unity of the intellect and the intelligible occupies an important place in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. This problem has been discussed from antiquity, including by some Muslim philosophers before him, but Mulla Sadra expressed dissatisfaction with their positions and sought to solve this problem on his own metaphysical foundation of the primacy of Being. In Chapter Six I discussed two possible ways to understand Mulla Sadra's solution: ontological and epistemological. Ontologically, whatever is known by the intellect is neither a distinct reality nor different. The intellect and the intelligible are both beings and modalities of the same reality. They are identical because they share the principle of identity, but are separate in belonging to the same reality in different ways. Their difference, which cannot be understood without their identity, is due to their proximity to and remoteness from Being. As all beings are modalities of Being, the intellect and the intelligible enjoy a unity. Epistemologically, the object known after being apprehended by the intellect is conceptualized and becomes a mental property. It is also important to understand that in Mulla Sadra's metaphysics it is not possible to think of the separation of the intellect from the intelligible. His metaphysics can also be seen as the unity of Being; but that unity, which is the ontological condition for the existence of the intellect and the intelligible, remains transcendent.

Although Mulla Sadra was a Muslim philosopher who developed a new philosophical system for interpreting the structure of nature and history, the influence of his thought on intellectual life was felt mainly in Persia in the Qajar era. At present, his philosophy is widely read and studied in Iran but little is known about him in Western academic circles. I hope that this book will serve by encouraging discussion of Mulla Sadra. This great thinker deserves wider attention for his place in Eastern and Western civilization and thought.

Finally, this presentation of his transcendent philosophy is a modest attempt to project the main ideas of Mulla Sadra. If my book has value it is in starting a discussion on him. I am hopeful that this beginning will lead to further fruitful research and debate on the ideas and contribution of this thinker to the intellectual life of our civilization.

Notes

Chapter One

1. Mulla is a religious title given to religious scholars in some parts of the Muslim world.
2. Shahab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, translated by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Porov, Utah, 1999), p. 45.
3. Suhrawardi, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, p. 45.
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ‘Spiritual Movement, Philosophy and Theology in the Safawid Iran’, in P. Lackson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran* (7 vols, Cambridge, 1991), vol. 6, p. 672.
5. Mulla Sadra, Muhammad b. Ibrahim (Sadr al-Din) Shirazi, *Al-Masha‘ir*, translated by Parviz Morewedge (New York, 1992), p. 43.
6. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1987), p. 203. See also Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, translated by Perviz Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, 1999), pp. 96–98.
7. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, p. 79.
8. Al-Uzbeki, Seyyed Muhammad Jamal, *Ghazbat al-Falasifa al-Ghazba al-Muta‘aliyah* (Teheran, 1999), p. 403.
9. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany, 1975), p. 2. Safawid was the first Islamic Shi‘ite dynasty founded by Shah Isma‘il in 1501 to rule Iran. It flourished particularly during the reign of Shah Abbas (1571–1629), who attempted to establish a new centralized administration and to revive the economy. In the process, he created the new Safawid city of Isfahan. After the death of Abbas I, the Safawid state declined, and its rule effectively ended in Iran in 1732.
10. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ‘Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), his Life, Doctrines and Significance’, in *Islamic Studies* (Beirut, 1967), pp. 121–122.
11. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha‘ir*, p. 3.
12. Mulla Sadra, Muhammad b. Ibrahim Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *Al-Asfar al-Arba‘ah*, Muhammad Husayn Tabatab’i (ed.), Da’irat al-Ma‘arif al-Islamiyah (9 vols, Qum, 1958), vol. 1, p. 25.
13. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha‘ir*, p. 7.
14. Ibid., p. 9, also see Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, p. 315.
15. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 4, see also Henri Bergson in Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (eds), *Key Writings* (New York, 2002), pp. 215–217.
16. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha‘ir*, p. 26.
17. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarie and Edward Robinson (London, 1997), pp. 22–25.
18. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha‘ir*, p. 43.
19. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 22–23.
20. Ibid.
21. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha‘ir*, p. 28.
22. Ibid., p. 33.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 40.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 24.
27. Ibid., p. 53.
28. Ibid., p. 55.

29. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 35.
30. Ibid., p. 433; see also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 55.
31. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 290.
32. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature (Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, edited and translated by M.J. Petry (London, 1970), p. 202.
33. Muslim Peripatetic philosophers denied change in substance and believed that the four categories of quality, quantity, place and position were subject to change.
34. Nasr, 'Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)', p. 114. In 1913 Max Horten wrote *Das Philosophische System von Schirazi*. This was followed by Henry Corbin's edition of a selection of Mulla Sadra's writings in French. In 1981 James Morris translated Mulla Sadra's *al-Hikma al-'Arshiyyah* ('The Wisdom of the Throne') into English. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hossein Ziai and Muhammad Abdul Haq have published articles on Mulla Sadra's life and aspects of his philosophy. However, the only systematic work to date in English is Fazlur Rahman's *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (1975). This applies modern philosophical terminology to Mulla Sadra's philosophical system. In 1992 Parviz Morewedge translated Mulla Sadra's *al-Mash'ir* into English. This work summarises Mulla Sadra's metaphysical system.

Chapter Two

1. The Seljuqs were a Turkish Sunni dynasty controlling large parts of the Middle East from 1038 to 1092. Seljuq forces captured Baghdad and gained control of the caliphate in 1055, thus becoming an empire stretching from Khurasan to Iraq. Their forces then entered Armenia, Azerbaijan and Anatolia, where in the battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Seljuq leader Alp Arsalan defeated the Byzantine army and captured Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes. This dynasty fell apart following the death of Malik Shah in 1092.
2. Mulla Salih Ibrahimi is a professor of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Religious Studies at the University of Teheran. When I met him at his home in Teheran he gave me a photocopy of his published monograph on Suhrawardi and his Kurdish origins. Ibrahimi has also investigated this matter in *Jiyaneway Zanayani Kurd le Jihani Islami*, published by Meharet in Teheran in 1974 (p. 880). See also Shahrazuri, *Nuzat al-arwaherawzat al-afrah*. 'Suhraward' or 'Suhrabard' is neither Persian nor Arabic but Kurdish. '*Suhr*' means red and '*bard*' rock. The rocks in this area are red and the village is called *Surabard* (or Redrock); it is populated by Kurds.
3. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. IX (Leiden, 1995), p. 777.
4. Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (London, 1997), p. 1.
5. Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 56. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Mahmud al-Shahrazuri (date of birth and death unknown) was an illuminationist thinker of the thirteenth century AD. His book *Nuzhat al-arwah wa rawdat al-afrah* is a biographical account of a number of philosophers including Suhrawardi. Another book by him, *Risalat al-shajara al-ilahiyyah*, is an encyclopaedia of philosophy. He expressed his own illuminationist ideas in two commentaries on Suhrawardi's philosophy.
6. Shahab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi, *Opera Metaphysica et Mystical 3*, an introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Teheran, 1993), p. 12. See also Henry Corbin, *Ta'rikh al-falsafa al-Islamiyyah*, with an introduction by Musa al-Sadr (Beruit, 1973), p. 304.
7. The Ayyubid Sunni Dynasty was founded by Salah al-Din Ayyubi (1138–1193). He was a military leader of Kurdish origin who became sultan of Egypt and all Muslim lands between the Nile and the Tigris. He declared *jihad* against the Crusaders and the substitution of Sunni for Shi'i Islam in Egypt. He defeated the Crusaders in the battle of Siffin in 1187 and captured Jerusalem. In the same year he seized most of the remaining Christian strongholds in Syria and Palestine.
8. Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 2.
9. Ibid., pp. 2–3. See also Muhammad 'Ali Abu Rayyan, *Ta'rikh al-fkir al-Falsafi fi al-Islam* (Beirut, 1973), pp. 409–10.

10. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi', in M.M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (2 vols, Wiesbaden, 1963), vol. 1, p. 380.
11. Hermes (Hermeticism) was considered the founder of the natural sciences by many and of the philosophy of Illuminationism by Suhrawardi. He is known by Muslim thinkers as Idris, one of the prophets whose name is mentioned in chapters 19, 21, 96 of the Qur'an. He is also known as the Thoth of the Egyptians, the Enoch of the Hebrews and Hushang of the Persians.
12. Shahab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, translated by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah, 1999), p. 2. *Hikmat al-Ishraq* is one of the major philosophical works of Suhrawardi and provides a profound account of the philosophy of Illuminationism. The three philosophical works written before *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, *Talwihat*, *Muqawamat* and *Mutarahat,* deal with Aristotle's philosophy. All four works are written in Arabic. The shorter treatises of Suhrawardi are written in Persian with the exception of some, which are partly in Arabic.
13. John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany, 2001), p. 61.
14. Ibid.
15. Nasr, 'Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 375–376.
16. It is important to mention that even the Qur'an in one place describes God as light: 'Allah is the light of heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp is in a glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow forth, through no fire touched it. Light upon Light! Allah guides to His Light whom He wills. And Allah sets forth parables for mankind, and Allah is All-Knower of everything.' See the Qur'an, 24:35.
17. Nasr, 'Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi', p. 62.
18. Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 9.
19. Ibid., p. 10.
20. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 110.
21. Ibid., p. 107.
22. Ibid., p. 110.
23. Plato, *Republic*, 596 a 6–7; *Phaedo*, 102 b.
24. Plato, *Symposium*, 210 e 1–212; a 7.
25. Plato, *Republic*, 509 b 6–10.
26. Ibid.
27. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, translated by Ted Sadler (London, 2002), p. 72.
28. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 79.
29. Ibid., p. 123.
30. Ibid., p. 91.
31. Abu Nasr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Turkhan b. Awzalugh al-Farabi, *Mabadi' Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*, translated by Richard Walzer (Oxford, 1985), p. 59.
32. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 120.
33. Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 65.
34. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 46.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 45.
38. Ibid.
39. Hossein Ziai, 'The Illuminationist tradition', in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Routledge History of World Philosophies (2 vols, London and New York, 1996), vol. 1, p. 469.

Chapter Three

1. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 8, p. 766. See also Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 284.
2. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 905.
3. Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia* (2 vols, London, 1930), vol. 2, p. 158.
4. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 8, p. 768.
5. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safawid Period', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, p. 657.
6. H.R. Roemer, 'The Safawid Period', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, p. 224.
7. Naqshabandiyyah and Khalwatiyyah were two popular Suuni Sufi orders in Persia and Anatolia. Both were influenced by Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being, at least until the time of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), who brought radical changes into the mystical doctrine of this order. Naqshabandiyyah was also hostile towards Shi'i Islam. Sirhind, as one of the spiritual masters of the order in India, declared holy war against Shi'ism and the eclectic system of religious belief endorsed by Akbar, the Mughal Emperor (r. 1542–1605), and branded them heretical.
8. According to Lapidus, the Safawid rulers were less hostile towards the Armenian Christians in Persia because of their conflict with the Greek Orthodox Church, whose base was in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. See Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, p. 297.
9. Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 122.
10. Nasr, 'Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safawid Period', p. 659.
11. Ibid., p. 660.
12. Hamid Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the Foundation of the School of Isfahan', in *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 623.
13. Nasr, 'Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safawid Period', p. 670.
14. Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the Foundation of the School of Isfahan', in *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 603.
15. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 914.
16. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 2.
17. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', p. 915.
18. Ibid., p. 916.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 917.
21. Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the Foundation of the School of Isfahan', p. 615.
22. Fazlur Rahman and Seyyed Muhammad Jamal al-Uzbeki hold contrary views. They believe that Mulla Sadra studied with Mir Findiriski. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safawid Period', p. 678 and Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 1. Also, al-Uzbeki, *Ghazbat al-Falasifa al-Ghazba al-Muta'aliyah*, p. 173.
23. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', p. 922.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 910.
26. Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the Foundation of the School of Isfahan', p. 606.
27. Mawlawiyyah is an Islamic Sufi order founded by Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (1207–1273). It is well known in Turkey and Persia and its followers are called the 'Whirling Dervishes'. The order was officially banned with the establishment of modern Turkey by the government of Mustafa Kamal in 1925.
28. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 3.
29. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, translated by Parviz Morewedge (New York, 1992), p. 43.
30. Ibn 'Arabi, Muhy al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Muhammad (1165–1240). One of the great Sufi masters, born at Murcia (al-Andalus) in Spain. He advocated the doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). He is the author of *The Meccan Revelations* (*al-Futuhatt al-Makkiyah*) and *The Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusus al-Hikam*).

31. Chittick, William C., *Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination: The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (New York, 1989), p. 79.
32. Qur'an, 2:163.
33. Ibid., 3:17, see also 4:171, 16:51, 112:1.
34. Abdul Hakim Khalifa, *The Metaphysics of Rumi: A Critical and Historical Sketch* (Islamabad, 1959), p. 145.
35. Ibn 'Arabi, Muhy al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Muhammad, *Fusus al-Hikam*, vol. 2, translated by Bulent Rauf (Oxford, 1986), p. 337.
36. Spinoza, Baruch (Benedict), *Ethics*, translated by Andrew Boyle (London, 1970), I. Definition VI, p. 4.
37. Ibid., Proposition XV, p. 11.
38. T. M. Forsyth, 'Spinoza's Doctrine of God in His Relation to His Concept of Reality', in S. Paul Kashap (ed.), *Studies in Spinoza: Critical and Interpretative Essays* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 7.
39. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 3.
40. Mohammad Faghfoory, 'Sadr al-Din Shirazi in the Context of Safavid History', in *Islam–West Philosophical Dialogue*, *The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, (7 vols, Teheran, 1999), vol. 1, p. 94.
41. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 3, see also Abu Abdullah Al-Zanjani, *Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi: Hayatuhu u Usul falsafatuhu* (Teheran, 2001), p. 22.
42. In a discussion with Prof. Gholam Hossein Ebrahimi Dinani on Mulla Sadra at the University of Teheran in May 2004, I wanted to know why Mulla Sadra chose Kahak after leaving Isfahan. Prof. Dinani held the view that perhaps Mulla Sadra went to Kahak because he had connections with Isam'ils in this region and was invited to stay there by some Shi'i Isma'ili family.
43. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 3.
44. Ibid.
45. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 43.
46. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Teheran, 1997), pp. 40–50.
47. S. Muhammad Khamenei, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Teheran, 2004), pp. 24–31.
48. Al-Zanjani, *Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi: Hayatuhu u Usul falsafatuhu*, pp. 23–26.
49. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, pp. 4–5.
50. Ibid., introduction by Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Muzafar, pp. 17–22.
51. Fazlr Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, pp. 8–9.
52. The Qajar dynasty was founded in Iran in 1779, following the death of Karim Khan Zand, the head of the Zand dynasty of southern Iran. Agha Muhammad Khan, the founder of this dynasty, defeated numerous rivals and brought all of Iran under his rule, establishing the Qajar dynasty with its territory from Georgia and the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf. The Qajars established their capital at Teheran, a village near the ruins of the ancient city of Rayy. In 1796 Agha Muhammad Khan was formally crowned as a new king. This dynasty was destroyed by a military coup in February 1921 by Reza Shah, who ousted Ahmed Shah, the last Qajar king. Ahmed Shah was officially removed from office by the Iranian national assembly in October 1925 while he was in Europe and the Pehlavi dynasty was established.
53. Hamid Algar, 'Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, p. 706.
54. Ibid., p. 708.
55. Ibid., p. 709.
56. Ibid., pp. 714–715.
57. Since we are dealing with the development of Shi'ite thought the Sunni Sufi orders are not discussed here.
58. Babism is a religious sect founded by Mirza 'Ali Muhammad (1819–1266/1850), who was born in Shiraz and executed in Tabriz. He claimed to be the *bab*, the 'gate' or the intermediary between the hidden imam and the Shi'ite community. His followers came to believe that he was the new Messiah

or the imam, which he himself did not deny. His new movement was regarded by the official *'ulama* as a threat to authority and dangerous. He was summoned to Teheran, where he was arrested then executed. One of his followers, Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, developed Babism further, establishing a new sect called Baha'ism, after which he assumed the name Baha'ullah. Baha'ullah was arrested in 1852 and imprisoned in Teheran. Later, in 1853, he was deported to Baghdad and claimed to be a new prophet. He was subsequently confined by the Ottomans in Adrianople and then in Acre in Palestine (now 'Akka, in Israel). The followers of Baha'ism were mainly Iranians; today many of them live in Western countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Australia.

59. Algar, 'Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran', p. 726.
60. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Din Shirazi and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran', in Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds), *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 177. See also Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, pp. 99–100.
61. Ibid.
62. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatab'i, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect*, compiled, edited and expanded by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani, translated by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, foreword by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York, 2003), in the foreword, p. xiv.
63. Nasr, 'Sadr al-Din (Mulla Sadra)', p. 960.
64. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari,* translated by Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York, 1977), p. 12. Sabzawari's autobiography is translated by Paul Sprachman from the Persian introduction to an Arabic text, taken from an article by Dr Kasim Ghani published in *Yadgar*, No. 3, pp. 45–47.
65. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 13.
66. Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1993), p. 358.
67. Ibid., p. 361.
68. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* (New York, 1996), p. 126.
69. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (eds), *Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality* (New York, 1988), p. 348.

Chapter Four

1. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 43. Mulla Sadra also wrote *Hashiyya 'ala sharh hikmat al-ishraq lil Suhrawardi* on Suhrawardi (published in 1898), and *Hashiyya 'ala al-rawashi lil sayyid Damad* about his teacher.
2. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 12.
3. Ibn Sina, 'On the Nature of God', in *Avicenna on Theology*, translated by Arthur J. Arberry (London, 1951), p. 25.
4. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 46.
5. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 22–25.
6. Ibid.
7. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 31.
8. Ibid., pp. 70–71.
9. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 43.
10. Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 203. See also *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, translated by Perviz Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, 1999), pp. 96–98, 'The Question of being (Letter to Ernist Junger 'Concerning "The Line"') (1955)', in Manfred Staseen (ed.), *Philosophical and Political Writings* (New York, 2003), p. 143.
11. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, p. 97.

12. Ibid., p. 86.
13. Ibid., p. 299.
14. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 46.
15. Heidegger, Martin, 'Nihilism', in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York, 2000), p. 849.
16. Kant has provided a table of twelve categories based on twelve possible judgments. The categories for Kant are subjective forms of the faculty of 'understanding', which generate our knowledge of the phenomenal world with the assistance of 'sensibility'. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by F. Max Muller (New York, 1960), p. 71.
17. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 6–7.
18. Ibid., p. 9.
19. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 31.
20. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 3–4. See also Mulla Sadra, 'Risalat isalat ja'il al-wujud', in *Majmu'at rasa'il falsafi Sadr al-Nut'ahilin*, Hamid Naji Isfahani (Teheran, 1997), p. 182.
21. Suhrawadi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 2.
22. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 10.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
24. Ibid., p. 14.
25. Ibid., pp. 15–16.
26. Ibid., p. 17.
27. Ibid., p. 19.
28. Ibid., p. 20.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 21.
31. Gholam Hossein Ebrahim Dinani, 'The Evidences of the Principality of Existence', in *Islam–West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 5 (Teheran: Sadra, 1999), p. 241.
32. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 34.
33. Ibid., p. 35.
34. Ibid., p. 37.
35. Ibid., p. 36.
36. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 39, see also Mulla Sadra's 'Risalat isalat ja 'l al-wujud', in *Majmu'a rasa'il falsafi Sadr al-Nuta'ahilin*, pp. 182–183.
37. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 47.
38. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 49, see also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 38.
39. Joseph, J. Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Bloomington, 1984), p. 54.
40. Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth', in *Basic Writings*, p. 127.
41. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 40.
42. Hubert. L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1* (Massachusetts, 1991), p. 11. Professor S.M. Khamenei has mistakenly used the Heideggerian term *Dasein* for the particularization of Being. He states that 'although existence is indivisible and even indefinable reality, its degrees of radiation upon objects could create several existences, each different from the other, and each possessing a specific definition and some features such as time and space. We might call each of them a Dasein'. See S.M. Khamenei, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Teheran, 2004), pp. 57–58. In Heidegger's ontology the term *Dasein* is used to describe human existence only and not the particularization of Being in all ontic beings. Heidegger clearly states that 'Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine. Thus *Dasein* is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand. To entities such as these, their Being is "a matter of indifference"; or more precisely, they "are" such that their Being can be neither the matter of indifference to them nor the opposite. Because *Dasein* has in each case mineness

[*Jemeinigkeit*], one must always use a *personal* pronoun when *one addresses it: 'I am.', 'You are.'*" See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 67–68. Elsewhere, Heidegger also states that '*Dasein* is not a "thing" like a piece of wood not such a thing as a plant–nor does it consist of experiences, and still less is it a subject (an ego) standing over against objects (which are not the ego). It is a distinctive being [*Seiendes*] which precisely insofar as it "is there" for itself in an authentic manner is not an object-in formal terms: toward-which of a being-directed toward it by mean-ing it.' See Martin Heidegger, *Ontology–The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, translated by John van Buren (Bloomington, 1999), p. 17.

43. William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 147–152.
44. Ibid.
45. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A79: B104.
46. Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 116.
47. Mark Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism. Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics* (New York, 1988), p. 7.
48. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 26.
49. Ibid., p. 27.
50. Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 220.
51. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1959), pp. 35–36.
52. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 40.
53. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 59.
54. Ibid.
55. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 9.
56. Ibid., p. 10.
57. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 36; see also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 30.
58. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 87.
59. Fazulr Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 31.
60. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 69.
61. Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', in *Identity and Difference*, translated with an introduction by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago, 2002), pp. 54–55.
62. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 229.
63. Ibid., p. 208.
64. Ibid., p. 92.
65. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 60–61.
66. Ibid., p. 28.
67. Ibid., p. 33.
68. Although Ibn Sina is considered a Peripatetic thinker, in my opinion his philosophy is an amalgamation of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas. I prefer to call him Aristotelian–Neoplatonist.
69. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 31.
70. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 60.
71. Ibid., pp. 38–39.
72. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, vol. 1, translated by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers, with an introductory preface by Viscount Haldane of Cloan (London, 1929), p. 389.
73. Abbas Yazdani, 'The Doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*) in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy', in *Islam–West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 2, p. 66.
74. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 216. It is also important to mention that Mulla Sadra in *Al-Asfar* states that the multiplicities and the ontic beings are illusory or shadows of reality. If this is the case, the ontological relationship between the reality of Being and the ontic beings will be proved to be false. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 47.

75. Ibid., p. 56.
76. Ibid., p. 8. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 45.
77. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 92.
78. John F. Quinn, 'Mulla Sadra's Theocentrism and Trans-Substantial Motion: A Critique of Western Cosmologies', in *Islam–West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 3, p. 27.

Chapter Five

1. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with an introduction and notes by J.B. Baillie (New York, 1967), p. 800.
2. Ibid.
3. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 55–56 and see *al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 35.
4. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 61. Heidegger also mentions gradations of unhiddenness or the truth in his lectures on Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'. See Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, p. 25 and pp. 48–53.
5. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 61.
6. Ibid., p. 86.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Ibid., p. 81.
9. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 12.
10. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 86.
11. Ibid., p. 81.
12. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (9 vols, New York, 1993), vol. 1, p. 39.
13. Ibid., p. 58.
14. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 61, see also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah*, with an introduction by S. Muhammad Khamenei (Teheran), 2000, p. 65.
15. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 96.
16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Lambda, translated by Richard Hope (Michigan, 1992), p. 249.
17. Ibn Sina, *Fann-i sama-'i tabi'i,* translated by Muhammad Ali Furuqi (Teheran, 1982), p. 123.
18. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, second edition with revised text and notes by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1985), p. 255.
19. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 64.
20. Ibid., p. 80.
21. Ibid., p. 84.
22. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 117.
23. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (New York, 1944), p. 38.
24. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 3.
25. George Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi: The Philosopher of the Arabs* (Rawalpindi, 1966), p. 53.
26. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 916.
27. Ibid.
28. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 141.
29. Ibn Sina makes a distinction between two concepts of time derived from two different types of movement. The first type of movement is not observable, such as continuity or motion from beginning to the end. This movement for him is subjective and a mental image. The second type, such as the movement of a body from one point to another in space, is observable. The first movement gives rise to the idea of time as an extension because the observation in this case is concerned with time-instances. He also refuses to call time an extension or subjective. Time is continuity like the measure of the moving body in space. See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 95.

30. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 140.
31. Ibid., p. 147.
32. Ibid., p. 148.
33. Ibid., pp. 149–150; see also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 110.
34. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 151.
35. Ibid.
36. For the category of being-for-itself see George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Part I, translated by William Wallace (London, 1985), p. 141.
37. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 235, and Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 116.
38. See Ibn Sina, 'Al-Risala fi al-'ishq', *Medieval Studies*, vol. 7, 1945, p. 214.
39. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 239.
40. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 116.
41. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 142.
42. Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 42.
43. Muhammad b. Mahmud Shahrazuri, *Sharh Hikmat al-ishraq* ed. H. Diya'i (Teheran, 1993), p. 520.
44. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 16.
45. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 248, see also Mulla Sadra's view on this matter in *Al-Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 6.
46. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 64.
47. Ibid., p. 17.
48. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 248.
49. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 116.
50. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 124.
51. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 68.
52. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Part I, p. 123, see also *Hegel's Science of Logic*, vol. 1, p. 86.
53. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Part I, p. 125.
54. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (London, 1996), p. 22.
55. Ibid., p. 8.
56. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 79.
57. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah*, pp. 147–148.
58. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sceinces*, Part Two: *The Philosophy of Nature* edited and translated by M.J. Petry (London, 1970), p. 202, see also Hegel's *Introduction to Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, translated by T.M. Knox and A.V. Miller (Oxford, 1985), p. 27.
59. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad*, with an introduction by Jalal al-Din Ashtiani (Teheran, 1975), p. 490.
60. Abu Nasr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Turkhan b. Awzalugh Al-Farabi, *Mabadi' Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*, translated by Richard Walzer (Oxford, 1985), p. 239.
61. Ibid., p. 241.
62. Ibid., p. 245.
63. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad*, p. 564
64. Mulla Sadra, unlike al-Farabi, does not elaborate his political philosophy in a single book. He discusses this matter briefly in *al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad*, *al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah*, *al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah*, *kasir al-asnam al-jahiliyyah* and *Sih asl*, which is written in Persian.
65. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah fi al-manahig al-slukiyyah* (Beirut, 1996), p. 365.
66. Mulla Sadra mentions several intellectual and physical qualities and conditions to be present in a person for that person to become a leader of the perfect society. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, pp. 493–494.

Chapter Six

1. Fazlur Rahman, 'Ibn Sina', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 497.
2. Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1970), p. 162.
3. Muhammad Abdul Rahman Merhaba, *Min al-falsafa al-yunaniyyah ila al-falsafa al-islamiyyah* (Beirut, 2000), p. 586.
4. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 164–165.
5. Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 94.
6. George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 7.
7. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-ishraq*, p. 10. See also Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p. 94.
8. Plato, *Meno*, edited with translation and notes by R.W. Sharples (London, 1985), 72, 5e.
9. Plato, *Meno*, 75, 5b.
10. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-ishraq*, p. 8.
11. Ibid.
12. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 360.
13. See William Chittick, 'On the Teleology of Perception', in *Transcendent Philosophy*, an international journal of comparative philosophy and Mysticism, London, vol. 1, no. 1, 2000, p. 2. See also Khamenei, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Teheran, 2004), p. 91.
14. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 219.
15. Ibid., p. 798.
16. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 364.
17. Ibid., pp. 360–362.
18. Ibid.
19. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A: 83, B: 109–112.
20. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 39.
21. Ibid., p. 236.
22. Ibid., p. 361.
23. Ibid.
24. Chittick, 'On the Teleology of Perception', p. 4.
25. Mualla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 216, see also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 228.
26. Oliver Leaman, 'Mulla Sadra: Perception and Knowledge by Presence', in *Transcendent Philosophy*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2000, p. 34.
27. William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (New York, 1998), pp. 332–333.
28. Ibn 'Arabi, *Futuhat al-Makiyyah*, vol. 4 (Beirut, 1972), pp. 393–410.
29. Ibid., pp. 325–332.
30. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn al-'Arabi* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 219–220.
31. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 297.
32. Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by T.E. Hulme, with an introduction by Thomas A. Goudge (Indianapolis, 1976), p. 23.
33. Mulla Sadra, *Se Asl*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), (Teheran, 1961), p. 32.
34. Ibid.
35. Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect*, pp. 10–20.
36. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 307.
37. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 1074b–1075a, and see also *De Anima*, translated [from the Greek] with introduction and notes by D.W. Hamlyn (Oxford, 1968), 492b–430a.
38. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, pp. 428–433. The unity of intelligent and intelligible is also discussed in *al-Asfar*, vol. 9, pp. 149–165.
39. Ibn Sina, *Al-Isharat wal-Tanbihat*, vol. 3, p. 293.

40. Ibn Sina, *Al-Mabda' wal-ma'a,* p. 6.
41. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 322.
42. Although Aqa Buzurg reports in *al-Dhari'ah*, vol. 1, p. 81 that the treatise was published in Teheran, Nasr says that the printed version of this work is not available. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, p. 42.
43. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, pp. 324–325.
44. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, pp. 215–216. See also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 311.
45. There is also another argument based on the dialectical relationship between thesis and antithesis in Hegel's philosophy that demonstrates the unity of consciousness and its known object. Here I have mentioned only the argument, which I believe is similar to what Mulla Sadra tried to prove in *Al-Asfar*.
46. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, pp. 324–325.
47. Ibn Sina, 'Ilahiyyat', in Syyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds) *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* (New York, 1999), pp. 200–201.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 202.
50. Mu'tazilite was a rationalist theological school founded in Basrah by some pupils of Hasan al-Basri (642–728) who had seceded from him. The Mu'tazilites interpreted the dogmas of faith in the light of human reason. They believed in the unity of God and the notion of divine justice, which led them to reject the idea of predestination and advocate the doctrine of free will or *al-qadariyyah*. A branch of this school was founded by Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 825) in Baghdad and was patronized by the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–833), who began an 'Inquisition' under the influence of the Mu'tazilites against those who believed in the uncreatedness of the Qur'an.
51. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Proposition III, Prop. V, p. 3.
52. Hanbalis were the followers of the Hanbali School of law, which was named after its founder Ahmed b. Hanbal (780–855). Before the 'Inquisition' of caliph al-Ma'mun, Ahmed b. Hanbal denied that the Qur'an was created, for which he was imprisoned. In 848, the caliph al Mutawakkil reversed this policy, abandoned the Mu'tazilite doctrine and accepted the idea of the uncreatedness of the Qur'an. The traditionalist theology of Ahmad b. Hanbal was subsequently revived. Ahmed b. Hanbal was a great scholar of Hadith and his main work is the *Musnad*.
53. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 147.
54. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 176.
55. Ibid., p. 188.
56. Ibid., p. 198.
57. Ibid., p. 228.
58. Ibid., p. 229.
59. Ibid., p. 232.
60. Ibid., p. 269.

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